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BRITISH IDEALISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

MARCUS LONG

SPECULATIVE philosophy had gone out of fashion in England at the end of the eighteenth century. The intellectuals, as in France, had turned from speculation about the nature of reality to the more rewarding investigations of natural science. They assumed that search for ultimate causes is contrary to the scientific spirit and likely to restore an interest in the occult. In this situation the universities had nothing to offer. J. S. Mill and Mark Pattison agree that the wine-bibbers and charlatans had taken over the centres of learning. Pattison points out, in his memoirs, that Oxford was a closed clerical corporation where the ability to drink was more important than the ability to think for election as a fellow. It is interesting to note that Metz, in his detailed list of the philosophers in England during the nineteenth century, does not mention any university teachers until the middle of the century. This is all the more surprising since philosophy was, at that very time, enjoying one of its most triumphant periods in Germany through the romantics, culminating in Hegel. But the English were shut off from this influence by the continental wars, their hardy self-sufficiency, and their lack of knowledge of the German language. They only knew about the movement through some bad translations of part of the writings of Kant and what they could glean from reviews. Hence the picture they received was very much distorted and they were glad that their isolation spared them from such crude rationalism and scepticism.

This does not mean that the problems with which philosophy is concerned were wholly neglected. There was much speculation about moral and religious issues. The implications of the Newtonian science had been worked out for the whole sphere of human activities and it had been shown that materialism could provide, both in thought and in practice, a doctrine encouraging tolerance, humanitarianism, and a genuine interest in social reform. It must have been disconcerting to find that atheists, whose testimony could not be accepted in the law courts, were more forward in applying the principles of the Golden Rule than many who prided themselves on their orthodoxy. Bentham had shown how unnecessary it is to appeal to ultimate principles or spiritual powers or mysterious natural laws to point the way for legislative and personal morality. What is needed can be found in a psychological examination of human nature and behaviour, for what ought to be done rests upon the interests and motives of the people concerned and on nothing more ultimate. While this was not significant philosophy it could claim to be in the grand tradition of English empiricism and in the spirit of Hume. And that was merit enough. For, as Stirling points out as late as 1865, "Hume is our Politics, Hume is our trade, Hume is our Philosophy, Hume is our religion—it wants little but that Hume were even our taste."[1]

[1]J. H. Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel* (Edinburgh, 1898), lxii.

Hume had shown that knowledge is confined to the data of immediate experience. The world, for each of us, is a conjunction of atomic ideas joined together by principles of association based on custom or habit. Questions about materialism and spiritualism are really out of order since they demand a knowledge which, in the nature of the case, is not available. Questions about God and ultimate spiritual facts, while they may have some practical significance, cannot receive any assured answers. Hence philosophy, if there is any philosophy, is a defence of scepticism and a reminder that thought has limits beyond which any claim to knowledge is likely to be nothing but intellectual fraud.

It is true that the work of Hume, by denying the objective validity of such principles as causality, raised doubts about the conclusions of the natural scientists also. But the scientist has the happy faculty of closing his eyes to the impossibility of his task while he proceeds to perform it. After Hume, the philosophic criticism will be seen in its proper perspective, will find its place in the scientific system, and be regarded as a scientific discovery. In other words, the theory of fallibilism, or knowledge as only probable, had to wait for a later period to become fundamental for science. In the meantime the scientists accepted the world as a mechanism, governed by inflexible laws, and needing only the principles of the conservation of matter and energy to make it a closed system where mystery and problems are not rooted in the nature of the world but are a phase of the diminishing ignorance of scientists.

When the scepticism of Hume is combined with the mechanism of science then man, who was but a little lower than God for the Psalmist, becomes only a function of matter. He is a cog in a machine, a minor element in a materialistic system. The world in which he is placed is a mathematical world, silent, colourless, with none of the qualities in response to which men find spiritual exhilaration. These qualities are psychological additions with only subjective status. Newton had preserved a place for God in his system but his followers were more consistent and banished God as an unnecessary hypothesis. So the triumph of reason and science, which seemed to promise so much, left man desolate and alone in a tyrannical universe with nothing but subjective illusions to satisfy his spiritual desires.

We have given away the secret by calling it the triumph of reason, for discursive reason is cold, methodical, and indifferent to emotional demands. Reason cannot share the triumph of discovery with the feelings; it is in reality a dry light. And it was from this side that the revolt against this mechanistic and materialistic world had to come. The feelings, outraged by their deposition, reasserted themselves among the literary men who asserted the equal right of feeling to decide the nature of man and his relation to the universe. But there was nothing to justify this conviction in English philosophy. Carlyle and Coleridge were forced, in their stand against the juggernaut of materialistic science, to seek a justification for

the spiritual nature of the world in German philosophy. Their revolt was supported by men with more specific religious interests.

The ordinary religious man cannot feel the force of the conflict between science and religion since his ignorance of science is an impregnable defence. But even where he is aware of it he may escape by asserting the superior evidence of faith.

> Here then we rest; not fearing for our creed,
> The worst that human reasoning can achieve,
> To unsettle or perplex it. . . .[2]

Men like Newman found the answer in a rational defence of irrationalism; they looked to the feelings as a more certain guide to truth and were prepared to submit their opinions to an established authority. But the intellectual believer finds it difficult to solve the problem by an uneasy partition and prefers to look for a higher principle to resolve the contradiction. To such a man the new science could not be gainsaid nor could the spiritual aspirations be silenced; it was necessary to find a solution that would satisfy both. Since this could not be done with the intellectual materials available in England it was necessary to follow the literary men to Germany. Hutchison Stirling, a Scottish doctor who practised medicine in Wales until a legacy enabled him to retire, made the Continental tour in search of a solution. He found it in the philosophy of Hegel. "Supping with two students of German before I was in German as deep as they, I heard this Hegel talked of with awe, as, by universal repute, the deepest of all philosophers, but as equally also the darkest . . . it was understood that he had not only completed philosophy, but, above all, reconciled to philosophy Christianity itself—*That struck!*"[3] Stirling, like many another convert, accepted, as a solution to his problem, a doctrine he did not understand, but, unlike many other converts, the conversion stuck and he spent the remainder of a long life seeking to understand the message and preaching it to others. After years of very hard work he published in 1865 *The Secret of Hegel* in which he made a valiant, if unsuccessful, effort to translate the barbarous German of Hegel into readable English with a preface expounding the system for English readers. Thus, by the middle of the century, a new note had been struck. Some die-hards, like J. S. Mill, resisted the influx of the Continental ideas, but they had no means of stopping it. The outraged feelings demanded this answer and they could not be silenced. Soon men like Green and his disciples carried the doctrine into the universities and the homespun theories were wellnigh forgotten under the dominance of what came to be called "neo-Hegelianism."

It is not easy to describe this movement of thought in a brief essay; one can only hope to show some of its general principles as a reason for its triumph. And to do this we must go back to Hume. Hume had reduced

[2]W. Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, IV, 197-9.
[3]Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel*, xviii.

the world to immediate experience and this immediate experience to atomic sense-data joined together by principles of association on the analogy of Newton's independent particles linked together by gravitation. It was not until the time of James Mill that these principles of association were clearly stated. But that does not matter for our purposes. The important point is that for Hume there was no necessity involved in the relations. Causality, for instance, is a result of custom or habit, a determination of the mind. And there the matter rested in England. But in Germany, Kant saw that Hume's position made any claim to knowledge, including scientific knowledge, impossible. He answered the Scottish philosopher by showing that the systematizing principles, such as causality, are essential as the necessary conditions without which there can be no experience at all. But, to defend this position, Kant had to show that the ordering principles, or categories, stem from the nature of thought and give no information about the external world. So he distinguished between things as they really are and things as they are experienced. Hence, so far as the external world is concerned, he made no advance on Hume. But in his treatment of morality Kant, unwittingly, provided a way of escape from the impasse he had created. He found the source of the moral law in the human reason, not as a separate entity but as one expression of a universal reason. There is the solution to the problem. Let us find the conditions of experience, not in the individual, but in a universal reason, and the whole panorama of the universe becomes again an ordered system in which whatever is rests upon rational and necessary conditions. Then let us call this universal reason God, and the universe, in all its phases, becomes a manifestation of the Supreme Being and everything becomes alive with His presence. This is the essence of the Hegelian philosophy, as Stirling saw it and, as such, it offers the final exposition of Paul's statement that God is that "in which we live and move and have our being." It seemed to Stirling that this was the solution to the problem in English thought. Now it was not possible for science to challenge the Christian concepts, for the right of science to call itself knowledge rests upon the validity of Christianity.

This doctrine justified the reassertion that the world is, ultimately, spiritual. Bishop Berkeley had shown that materialism does not rest on any immediate facts but is an interpretation of facts and nothing more. He had tried to show that the interpretation of the world as spiritual rests on more cogent arguments. Unfortunately, to maintain the thesis he had to deny any meaning or existence to matter and could only escape solipsism by an unwarranted appeal to God. The new solution avoided this difficulty. Nature could be retained as a physical system with matter as one form of the absolute spirit's temporal manifestation. The error of the mechanist and the materialist is not in accepting matter but in considering it ultimate.

This conception of the universe, including man, as the temporal manifestation of God made the gap between man and nature untenable. Both

are, in their different ways, manifestations of the same spirit. And with this is solved the provoking problem, implicit in materialism, of the difference between the world as it is and the world as it is experienced. Nineteenth-century physics was mathematical, and Galileo had shown, in the seventeenth century, that mathematical science cannot deal with the qualities of colour, sound, etc. that seem to belong to the external world. It was necessary, therefore, for the physical sciences to place these secondary qualities within the percipient and treat nature as possessing only such qualities as can be measured directly. There is no doubt about the usefulness of this distinction for scientific purposes but it leaves no alternative but scepticism in philosophy and makes the insights of literary men and artists only subjective illusions. Thus Whitehead points out that we have been deluding ourselves with paeans of praise to nature for the scent of the rose, the beauty of the sunset, and the delight of the nightingale's song since, in the scientific theory, we ought to have praised ourselves as the sole authors of all these delightful experiences.[4] Again the feelings are outraged by such distinctions and we shrink from Hobbes' scientific picture of "bodies moving without sound through a space without colour." The new theory eliminated the problem since it denied the absolute distinction between nature and man; both are manifestations of the same eternal spirit. Nature is to us the external, that without which we cannot have any experience, and in the conquest of which we realize ourselves, but this very conquest is a proof that nature *is* responsive to our needs and aspirations.

It is this responsiveness of nature that is important as the final answer to subjectivism. For we now have a right to suppose that the supreme values of truth, beauty, and goodness are not subjective fancies but are as objective and real as any other phases of the universe. Moral standards are to be discovered in the heart of the universe itself, and not in the selfish interests of individuals or in the diverse customs of nations, no matter how they may be related to each other in historical development. And it is through the objectivity of values that the spiritual aspirations of man can be satisfied and man can feel himself at one with a universe that is the embodiment of reason.

One could proceed with several illustrations of the new theory to show its practical usefulness and theoretical satisfaction. But perhaps enough has been given to show why such a conception would gain the favour of those who were seeking for some guarantee of values, some assurance that the world is not a heartless machine and that there is a spiritual reality beneath the cold, material aspect of the universe.

But it was the fate of English philosophy, because of its later start in the nineteenth century, to lag behind the Continental developments. At the very time when the English thinkers were welcoming the philosophy of Hegel as a new revelation, the German philosophers were abandoning

[4]A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (Cambridge University Press, 1946), 68.

it as inadequate. And they were doing it on the basis of a factor we have been noting throughout, namely, the claims of feeling as a source of insight into the nature of the universe. Hegel seemed to them to have given too much place to reason and this had led to difficulties.

Hegel had returned to simple experience wherein there is no distinction between subject and object. This distinction is the result of analysis and not a condition of experience. Hegel considered his predecessors to have erred by taking it as a starting-point for investigation. For where the distinction is considered valid the problem of causality arises. On the one hand some insist that the object is the cause of experience. But if so the object can never be known as it is apart from perception. For good or ill our world ends at the surface of the body and there is no way of comparing our experience with its causal objects. Hence this position must end in scepticism. On the other hand, if the subject is the source of experience, and there is no doubt that our experience is constructed by interpretations of what is given, then each person's world is his own and there is no basis for a common experience. But there is no doubt that different people do have similar experiences. The only way out of the dilemma is to go beyond the distinction of subject and object and posit a universal principle as the cause of all experience. In this way we can retain the individual initiative in interpreting sense-experience and, at the same time, understand why there should be such agreement between different conscious centres.

Hegel posited a universal reason and construed the universe as a rational system. But if the universe is a rational system it is governed by a form of necessity and it should be possible to determine the forms of experience by reference only to our own reasonings. It is here we run into difficulties. There is always an element of caprice, a stubborn, irreducible fact that will not fall into our system. The followers of Hegel were forced to see what Bacon had seen many years before, that nature is much too subtle for our rational formulae. While they were still prepared to accept a universal principle as the only possible interpretation of the universe they rejected any attempt to predict the specific forms its manifestation would take. Hence they insisted that for information as to what actually occurs in nature an appeal must be made to experience and to science.

One of the most influential of this group was Lotze. He sought to restrain the unbridled reason of Hegel by emphasizing the importance and equal standing of feeling and volition. He insisted upon the need for thought to find its forms in the content of experience, showed that discursive reason cannot reach ultimate reality but must give way to intuition, and stressed the importance of values. Fortunately, the English were no longer isolated by language barriers, and the influence of Lotze was felt almost immediately through the efforts of the two most distinguished of the later idealists, Bradley and Bosanquet. Both of these men agreed that panlogism and the dialectic of Hegel provide only an "unearthly ballet of bloodless categories." The essentials of the Hegelian doctrine were retained, but there was now

an emphasis on the need to begin with, and to remain in contact with, experience. This development was important since it helped to remove the strangeness of the Hegelian doctrine and bring it into harmony with the empiricism that had always seemed natural to English thought. Now the arguments for the Absolute, or the spiritual nature of reality, rested on the facts of experience. Bosanquet, indeed, affirmed that all the evidence required to support the doctrine of the Absolute could be found in the examination of a single day's experience in the life of an ordinary man since any individual is aware of the fragmentariness of his experience and the need to transcend his limitations.

They agreed that an unbridled reason could not reveal the inner nature of reality. Apart from other considerations, to make reason the only instrument for the discovery of the nature of reality seemed to them an unwarranted emphasis on only one phase of the individual. Man is a whole in which one may distinguish thought, feeling, and will, but it is the wholeness of man that matters, and any attempt to emphasize one aspect to the exclusion of the others is a fallacious specialization. In Germany the revolt against the rationalism of Hegel had led to an exaggerated emphasis on feeling. But feeling, by itself, is a source of anarchy in philosophy; where there are no requirements of consistency there can be no criteria of correctness. The English idealists sought to restore the balance and, by emphasizing totality, refused to give precedence to any single aspect of man. It is the total response that counts. Reason without the insights of feeling remains barren; feeling without the guidance of reason is uncontrolled. Hence, for Bosanquet, thought is the whole system of experience—externality come to meaning—in its self-transcendence, the total reaction of the individual as he seeks the enlargement of his own experience by realizing his unity with the spiritual principle of which he is an inadequate expression.

This emphasis on totality, on wholeness or organism, is the major idea of Hegel to survive. For in idealism the individual is an abstraction, a function of the total system. It is the whole that matters; without it there cannot be an individual. Or, to put it differently, the individual, considered in himself, remains with ragged edges pointing to the social context from which he has been torn. And any attempt to understand the individual involves an attempt to understand the whole. It is the story of Tennyson's flower in the crannied wall given philosophic formulation. And it is this total system, interpreted as spiritual, that represents the ultimate truth about the universe. Such truth is not to be obtained by the exercise of reason alone but by the total response of the self.

It was with this system of ideas that the idealists opposed the other tendencies in English thought. Their first triumph was an easy one, over the current empiricism and individualism. The empiricists had reduced all to the atomic ideas of experience and had emphasized the passivity of the mind in the moment of experience. The idealists stressed the activity of the

mind, making experience a constructive effort. Mind, or thought itself, is but the nisus of experience to transcend its narrow limits and to eliminate contradiction by gaining a higher synthesis. Such an activity of the mind makes the conception of atomic ideas untenable. Every idea, like every other element in the universe, is an abstraction when considered in isolation from its context. The implications of the doctrine for political theory and ethics are obvious. It meant the abandonment of the individualism of J. S. Mill and the denial of the whole ethics of utilitarianism and *laissez-faire*. Any political theory based on the reality of separate individuals must be false for the simple reason that there are no separate individuals. The problem of the utilitarians in finding a base for humanitarianism on an ethics of self-interest is seen to be an artificial problem. The individual is a function of the whole without meaning in abstraction from it. Society is not a combination of individuals; without society there are no individuals. It is only in social relations that an individual can realize his potentialities. It follows that a doctrine which begins with rights is on a wrong footing; the main emphasis must be on duties, on social obligations. All of which is summed up in the title of the most forceful chapter in Bradley's ethics, "My Station and Its Duties." It is the challenge to man to find what he needs in the situation where he is and to develop his spiritual nature by conquering his circumstances. It is no accident that idealism became the philosophy of conservatism emphasizing reform and not revolution.

A new opponent emerged in what may be called naturalism, the assertion that truth can only be found by the methods of the natural sciences and with the content the sciences provide. It is the doctrine of limited empiricism bolstered by the authority of science. The hard-boiled scientist can see no justification for interpreting the physical as really the spiritual. To this new attack the idealists replied by distinguishing between facts and values, the new idea that Lotze had made available. They agreed that science is an ultimate authority in its own sphere. But they argued that there is nothing in science to justify the metaphysical theory of materialism; in fact, science has no right to take sides on such matters which are clearly in the sphere of metaphysics. The scientists ought to stick to their facts and leave to the philosophers the determination of the ultimate nature of those facts. If this were done it would be seen that nothing in the results of science runs counter to the interpretation of the universe as spiritual; in fact, such an interpretation would be more in keeping with the conclusions of the sciences themselves. The spiritual interpretation does not alter the facts but completes them by showing their significance or value. Idealism is seeking to be true to the whole of experience while the scientist, for easily justifiable reasons, abstracts from the whole what suits his limited purposes. So the idealists argued that materialism and naturalism are uncritical metaphysics, the refusal to ask questions about ultimate principles.

The naturalistic doctrine received new support from the Darwinian theory of evolution. The strongest arguments for the idealistic and religious

interpretations of human nature and social institutions seemed undermined by the evidence that man had developed from humble, material beginnings through a series of accidental variations and that the development of social institutions could be traced to primitive needs and customs. There is no fundamental contradiction between the philosophy of Hegel and a theory of evolution, as such; in fact, Hegel had made the theory of evolution fundamental in the temporal manifestation of the Absolute before it had become a scientifically respectable doctrine. But his theory involved a rationale in the development and Darwin's did not. The key to the difference is found in the theory of accidental variations. Stirling, who preferred to think of man as one with God and sharing in the divine nature, rejected the theory as degrading man. "An 'advanced thinker' . . . adds . . . an enlightened pride in his father the monkey. . . . Monkey is the password. Sink your pedigree as man, and adopt for family tree a procession of the skeletons of monkey—then superior enlightenment radiates from your very person, and your place is fixed—a place of honour in the acclamant brotherhood that names itself 'advanced' . . . this is the acknowledged pinnacle of English thought and English science now. Just point in these days to the picture of some huge baboon, and—suddenly—before such enlightenment—superstition is disarmed, priests confess their imposture, and the church sinks—beneath the Hippocampus of a gorilla."[5] Stirling feels that the theory of evolution is just what the English deserve for their neglect of philosophy and their blindness to the spiritual realities vindicated in the philosophy of Hegel.

Bosanquet and Bradley could not share Stirling's resentment against Darwin. They retained the distinction between science and philosophy and were prepared to accept, as an account of natural events, whatever the scientists agreed was adequate. They were satisfied to point out that, as an ultimate explanation of evolution, materialism is hopelessly inadequate. On the basis of materialism, man is but an accidental appearance in an indifferent universe whereas, for idealism, he is the culmination of the process without which it could have no significance. Make man but an accident and the whole basis of poetry, philosophy, and all spiritual aspirations is gone. The idealists were convinced that these fields carry their own evidence and are beyond the critical competence of science. The Spencerian doctrine of development from the simple to the complex smacks of the same sort of miracle as the stream rising beyond the level of its source. And it seemed strange to them that the natural sciences in demolishing religion should become the new advocates of miracles. Hence, they said, Have your mechanism if you will, and without it science is impossible, but seek for its source in spirit and not in matter. There is no reason why the Absolute should avoid mechanistic forms in its temporal and physical manifestation and there is the whole weight of scientific theory to suggest it has. But to do this is to deny the validity of accidental variation and to emphasize the doctrine of natural selection. For by this means we can interpret

[5]Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel,* xxxv.

whatever is as a specific result of the conditions from which it emerged and discover in all things the pattern of the whole come to expression. It is now a well-known story that science itself has revolted against the narrowness of the Darwinian theory of accidental variations and has sought other solutions analogous to the suggestion of the idealists.

Wherever we go in nineteenth-century thought we are always brought back to the problem of the relation between science and religion. This is the one recurring theme throughout the whole period as men felt they had to take sides in the controversy about their respective authority. In our own day eminent scientists sometimes contribute articles to popular magazines expressing their faith in the fundamental doctrines of religion and, for the most part, are content to support their convictions with arguments that were exploded two or three hundred years ago. We cannot help feeling that they have simply compartmentalized their thinking and agreed to solve the problem by ignoring it. But this was not true at the end of the nineteenth century. Scientists of the first rank, such as Tyndall and Huxley, felt it necessary to take to the public platform to weaken the authority of religion since religion meant to them the uncompromising opponent of science and the major obstacle to its advance. It was a life and death struggle in which no quarter was asked, or given, and many of the recognized amenities of debate were not practised. It was inevitable that the later idealists would have to face this problem and just as inevitable that they could not find in the Hegelian philosophy the defence of orthodox Christianity that had won the adherence of Stirling.

Bradley entered the arena in his book *Appearance and Reality*. This work, published in 1893, is now recognized as a classic of English philosophy. When it was offered to Oxford for publication the delegates of the Clarendon Press refused to publish it because of its attacks on religion. Later, under pressure, they agreed to its publication but withheld their official approval. Bradley is very specific in his contention that the two major enemies of significant philosophy are naïve materialism and superstition, and he does not hesitate to point out that under superstition he includes the doctrines of the church. In fact, one of his major arguments to justify the practice of philosophy is the need for a critical investigation of first principles that will free us from such superstition. Bosanquet agreed with Bradley and, where Bradley had spoken with some hesitation, the former declared his antagonism to orthodoxy in open and well-rounded terms.

It must be made clear that neither Bradley nor Bosanquet was attacking religion, which they considered one of the highest forms of human experience, but was attacking the tendency of the church to accept superstition, without question, because of its formulation in the traditional creeds. Philosophy is, and must be, a critical examination of presuppositions and an attempt to overcome contradictions by a more adequate interpretation. Christian doctrine they considered to be full of contradictions, and they demanded a reformulation of its doctrines in the light of modern thought.

The fear of science had driven Christian thinkers into untenable positions and none more untenable than their opposition to science. All knowledge is one. It should be the task of theologians to accept scientific conclusions and to interpret them in terms of value and spiritual reality. If this were done it would involve a redefinition of God and man and the relations between them.

In orthodox Christianity it is considered fundamental to maintain that God is a Person with whom man must come to terms. But to make God a Person, and to emphasize His transcendence, is to place a gap between God and man that can only be crossed from the side of God, and by a miracle. For this doctrine of the personality of God depends upon the validity of dualism, against which the whole idealistic movement was in revolt. The implications of the position are best seen in the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination where the possibilities of salvation rest completely with God and only whom he selects has any chance for redemption. The Arminian doctrine modified this one-sided theory of salvation but did not correct its major defects. For both doctrines underlined the same thought—that man who is, presumably, the one most concerned with salvation is the one with least to do about it. Thus, without raising questions about the philosophic validity of specific doctrines this is enough to show that the whole system belongs to an earlier way of thinking and cannot maintain itself in the light of modern thought. Bosanquet suggests that God should be considered as the principle of Good in the universe, leaving the question of his existence or non-existence outside as an academic point without importance for religious experience. The only obligation on man is to become the most adequate vehicle of the Absolute, to realize the full potentialities of his personality, and this he can only do by recognizing his limitations and seeking to overcome them by identifying himself with the whole of which he is a faltering expression. And he affirmed that this was the doctrine recognized in the great tradition of philosophic thought and the truth that the great poets had always tried to express. Such a doctrine is a reminder to man that, at his best, he is less than he might be, and, at the same time, it reminds him that the conquest of his limitations is within his own power and rests upon him as his ultimate obligation.

Thus, whether it is a matter of political and social ethics, science, or religion, the doctrine of idealism, in English thought, resists any attempt to omit any fact of experience. The ultimate nature of reality is spiritual, and whether it is in nature, as physical, or in conscious experience, as spirit, it is there as the guarantee of values and the critic of limitation. All individuals, whether conscious or unconscious, are limited expressions of the ultimate spiritual whole and it is in the recognition of that fact, and the search of man to find himself and his place in the whole, that all morality and religion have their meaning. All is spirit. Truth is the Whole. Here are the expressions that guarantee to man that values have their place in the universe, that frustration is never final, and that all the highest spiritual aspirations have their satisfaction.

LIFE IN A QUAKER AUBURN

ELIZABETH BREWSTER

"Ballitore, in the county of Kildare, twenty-eight Irish miles from Dublin, is a village a little off the high road from Dublin to Cork. It is situated in a valley encompassed by gently rising hills, except where the river Griese takes its meandering course of about fourteen miles from its spring of Tubber, in the county of Wicklow, to its union with Barrow near Jerusalem, a little hamlet in the county of Kildare. Ballitore derives its name from its former marshy condition (bally *in Irish signifying a town or village, and* togher *a bog*), *from which it was reclaimed by drainage and careful cultivation."*[1]

WITH this brief description, Mary Leadbeater introduces to the readers of her *Annals of Ballitore* her native town, one of the most delightful villages of the world of literature; one of those villages, like Cranford and "Sweet Auburn," whose very names call up to the mind's eye a vision of rustic peace and happiness. In this little Quaker community, in the year 1758, Mary Shackleton, later Mary Leadbeater, was born. Her grandfather, Abraham Shackleton, had come to Ballitore from Yorkshire to establish a boarding school. This school prospered into Abraham's old age, when he was succeeded as head of the school by his son Richard, Mary's father. Surrounded as she was by a family of seven brothers and sisters, not to mention a whole school of boys whom she considered as very nearly brothers, Mary was in no danger of becoming an unsocial being. She spent a pleasant childhood, although one so far removed from excitement that one of the chief amusements of the children was to run races to catch a glimpse of the carriages passing along the highway, and the fortunate people within them. When they were confined to the house, she and one of the little boarders at the school used to pull each other's hair for a place at the window. Otherwise they lived harmoniously together, accompanying each other to plant their baby teeth in the field when they fell out, hoping for "some marvellous growth." Mary even planted sweet-pea seeds by the parlour hearthstone, with happy anticipation of her mother's delight when she saw flowers springing up by the fireside.

Mary had only dim recollections of the home of her grandfather, Abraham Shackleton, but she was impressed by the grandeur of the parlour, "with its sashdoor opening into the garden, and the map of Dublin, ornamented by pictures of its remarkable buildings, etc., over the chimney-piece," and by the "superior elegance" of the "Friends' room" (the guest room, that is) which was remarkable chiefly for "some peacock's feathers about the Chimney-piece."[2] She was greatly attached to her grandfather,

[1] *The Leadbeater Papers: A Selection from the MSS and Correspondence of Mary Leadbeater*, 2 vols. (2nd ed.; London, 1862), I, 15.
[2] *Ibid.*, I, 28-9.

whom she and her young sister loved to accompany to the fields in summer, helping him toss hay with tiny pitchforks that he had made for them. However, although he was generally indulgent to them, his Quaker distrust of vain frivolity made him show disapproval when he saw the little girls playing with dolls. Indeed, Mary's upbringing was in general very strict; and it was only through the indulgence of her Aunt Fuller, who was somewhat more worldly than Mary's mother, that she was allowed to read a collection of ballads that became a favourite with her.

Another relative to whom she was devoted was her Aunt Carleton. This aunt was unusually fond of pets, and was particularly proud of her pet pig, which used to lift the knocker of the hall door in order to get into the house. She kept two hens and a cock in the house, and the hens laid their eggs on a cushion under her chair. It was no wonder that her little niece viewed her with some awe, as perhaps possessing magic power over animals.

And so, among these familiar surroundings, the little Mary grew up. In the romantic days of girlhood, she used to wander alone in the orchard, carving on the bark of the trees, and, seeing the red sap flow, wondered if Ovid's tales could be true, and this could be the blood of a mortal changed into a tree. But, in spite of such fancies, her interest in the daily life of the school and the village did not desert her. She had a shrewd eye for the eccentric and humorous in character. In her *Annals of Ballitore* she tells with delight of how Joseph Wills, otherwise a sober, respectable man, whose slow and stately progress down the street was so impressive, used to walk into neighbours' houses, and ask what they had for dinner, all the while poking his staff into the pot. And then there was old Mary Barnard, a sister of Mary's grandfather, who, although deprived of sight, went about feeling the bottoms of the chairs and tables, to see that no dust collected; and Molly Hudson, who was invited to visit the Shackletons while her brother's house was being rebuilt, and stayed for twenty years. Ballitore had indeed some odd inhabitants.

Perhaps the inhabitants of Ballitore needed to be odd, in order to provide amusement for each other. There was little excitement in the town, except for the parade of the mummers once a year, and finally even that was put an end to. On one occasion a showman visited the town, exhibiting what he said was a mandrake, and attracting considerable attention. The "mandrake," upon investigation, turned out to be made of the skeleton of a frog combined with the fibres of the roots of a plant. Such were the marvels of Ballitore. But on rare occasions there came to the village, and particularly to the home of the Shackleton family, a most distinguished visitor, formerly a pupil of Abraham Shackleton, and an old friend of his son Richard. This was no less than Edmund Burke. He was the pride of the neighbourhood and of the family, and they never tired of telling anecdotes about him to prove his warm heart and quick wit. It was on a visit to Burke, in 1784, that Mary Shackleton became acquainted with George Crabbe and Sir Joshua Reynolds. Crabbe, then a young man of thirty, had

lately received much commendation for his poem, *The Village,* which had been published in the preceding year. Richard Shackleton, who had a taste for poetry, greatly admired the poem, and told young Crabbe that "Goldsmith's would *now* be the Deserted Village." Crabbe, on his side, retained for many years the remembrance of "the pretty demure lass, standing a timid auditor while her own verses were read."[3] For Mary Shackleton also wrote verse, not too brilliantly, it must be admitted, for her real bent was towards prose, but pleasantly enough to win the pride of her father and the praises of her friends.

The distinguished company which she met at Edmund Burke's contrasted strangely with the rustic inhabitants of the little Yorkshire village, the home of some distant relatives, which she visited in the same year. These relatives exhibited her proudly as "Our coosin frae Ireland that maks the bonnie verses," to which they added encouragingly, in spite of Mary's embarrassment, "Say some of them, wilt thoo?" In this village Mary was something of a visiting celebrity, and the squire's silver coffee-pot was sent from the "great hoose" to all the houses that she visited, in order that she might be suitably entertained.[4]

After this mild whirl of gaiety, Mary Shackleton returned to her native Ballitore, and, however attracted she may have been by this glimpse of the world beyond her narrow community, settled down peacefully and happily to the humdrum events of village life. Rarely during the rest of her comparatively long life did she leave Ballitore again. In 1791 she married William Leadbeater, a former pupil at Ballitore School, who while there had become convinced of the truth of the Quaker faith and the beauty of the young Quakeress. In 1794 Mary Leadbeater's first work, *Extracts and Original Anecdotes for the Improvement of Youth,* a collection of prose and verse, was published. But, in spite of public success and private happiness, difficult times were in wait for her. An illness which nearly proved fatal struck her husband in 1797, and he had barely recovered when Ballitore, along with most of Ireland, suffered a hard blow in the rebellion of '98.

Trouble had been brewing for some time in Ireland. The Irish Parliament could hardly be said to represent the people. The Roman Catholics, who formed the larger part of the population, were excluded from public office; and Ireland had its share of "rotten boroughs" where the franchise was so limited that votes could easily be bought. In Ireland, as in Europe generally, advanced minds were aroused by the French Revolution into stronger protest against local injustices. In 1791 Wolfe Tone founded the Society of United Irishmen, which was to include all classes and religions, and the main objects of which were to get rid of corruption in the government and to remove religious disabilities. It seemed that Catholic Emancipation was nearing, when, in 1795, Grattan introduced an Emancipation Bill into the Irish Parliament. However, George III vetoed the measure.

[3] *Ibid.,* II, 337.

[4] *Ibid.,* I, 148.

Naturally, the popular discontent was great. Through the influence of Wolfe Tone a French fleet of forty-three vessels was sent to Ireland in 1796 to aid in an uprising, but a storm scattered the fleet, and only sixteen vessels entered Bantry Bay. Mary Leadbeater was at that time at Carlow, near Bantry, attending a Quaker meeting, and saw the soldiers march out of the town to go to Bantry. Nothing came of this "invasion," although great hopes had preceded it. The extent of these hopes is seen in the triumphant swing of the popular ballad, *The Shan Van Vocht,* composed on this occasion. (*Shan Van Vocht* means "poor old woman"—that is to say, of course, Ireland.)

Oh! The French are on the sea,
Says the Shan Van Vocht;
The French are on the sea,
Says the Shan Van Vocht;
Oh! the French are in the Bay,
They'll be here without delay,
And the Orange will decay,
Says the Shan Van Vocht.
Oh! the French are in the Bay,
They'll be here by break of day,
And the Orange will decay,
Says the Shan Van Vocht.[5]

The people paid dearly for any hopes they may have had of the success of the French invasion. The country was put under military rule, and the Cork militia were stationed in peaceful Ballitore. Householders were obliged to post the names of the inhabitants of their houses on the doors, and the authorities could enter at any time of the day or night.[6] In 1798 the Tyrone militia, professed Orangemen, were stationed in the town. They were not only quartered on the inhabitants without recompense, but went on foraging parties for provisions, particularly whisky. They also searched the houses for firearms and seditious papers. Luckily, they did not find in Mary Leadbeater's home some verses which "in very tolerable poetry avowed disloyal sentiments," verses which had been circulating privately from hand to hand.[7] One wonders if the poem could have been the *Shan Van Vocht* itself. Although Mrs. Leadbeater was loyal to the Crown, it is probable that "the military" would have considered the possession of such a paper as highly incriminating. Suspicion was only too easily aroused, and revenge was taken for disloyalties never attempted. For instance Joseph Holt, one of the rebel leaders, said that formerly he had taken no interest in politics, but had nevertheless offended one of the petty functionaries of the neighbourhood, who accused him of being a member of the United Irishmen. Although he escaped before his arrest, his house was plundered and burned, and his wife and children left destitute. He was thus forced

[5]Kathleen Hoagland, *1000 Years of Irish Poetry* (New York, 1947).
[6]*Leadbeater Papers,* I, 219-23. [7]*Ibid.,* I, 224.

into joining the ranks of the disaffected; and, he said, there were many others like him who revolted in mere self-defence.[8] One of the Irish opposition papers of the time gives the "receipt to make a rebel" that follows: "Take a loyal subject, uninfluenced by title, place, or pension; *burn* his house over his head; let the soldiery exercise every species of insult and barbarity towards his helpless family, and march away with the plunder of every part of his property they choose to save from the flames."[9]

In little Ballitore conditions grew worse. More soldiers were brought in, and every entrance to the village was guarded to prevent people from coming in or going out. People were whipped publicly to force them to confess disloyalty. A number of the inhabitants were taken away as prisoners. Such happenings must have been common throughout Ireland, for in June of that year, after open rebellion had broken out, a motion was brought into the British House of Commons: "That this House, understanding it to be Matter of public Notoriety, that the System of Coercion had been enforced in Ireland, with a Rigour shocking to Humanity, and particularly that Scourges and other Tortures have been employed for the Purpose of extorting Confession . . . is of opinion that an immediate Stop should be put to Practises so disgraceful to the British Name."[10] However, this motion was superseded by the Question for Adjournment, and nothing more seems to have been heard of the matter.

In May, 1798, the rebellion broke. On May 24 a report reached Ballitore that Dublin was in the hands of the rebels and that the gaol at Naas had been forced open. The soldiers were ordered to march to Naas. Many people threw off their pretence of loyalty, and appeared wearing the forbidden green. A band of two or three hundred rebels, armed with pikes, knives, and pitchforks, took possession of the town. A group of these came to Mrs. Leadbeater's house demanding provisions, and she provided them with milk and bread. However, when she expressed some fright at the presence of so many armed men in the room, they replied cheerfully, "We'll be out in a shot," and quickly departed.[11] She pays a passing tribute to Malachi Delaney, the head of the rebel band, as a "generous enemy," saying that he "exerted himself to prevent bloodshed, and showed as much humanity as courage." The rebels, however, held the town for only a short time. The previous reports as to the success of the rebellion had been exaggerated, and on May 27 the army returned to Ballitore. A horrible scene of confusion now followed. Houses were set on fire and the soldiers went about bent under the weight of the plunder they carried. Mrs. Leadbeater writes: "Soldiers came in for milk; some of their countenances were pale with anger, and they grinned at me, calling me names which I had never heard before." One soldier pressed his musket against her breast, but

[8]Thomas Wright, *History of Ireland,* 3 vols. (London and New York, n.d.), II, 660-1. [9]*Ibid.,* I, 660.
[10]*Journal of the House of Commons,* June 22, 1798.
[11]*Leadbeater Papers,* I, 229.

decided against shooting her. Actually, the only harm done in her home appears to have been a little plundering and breaking of glass. Others were not so fortunate. Many of her friends and neighbours were killed or had their homes burned, and little difference seems to have been made in treating the loyal and the rebellious.

Gradually peace, although a sullen one, returned to Ireland and to Ballitore. In order to replace the houses that had been burned by the army, the inhabitants of Ballitore were obliged to cut their trees, which had been for many years the pride of the village. No longer could Mary Leadbeater delight in walking in the groves where

> The stately fir with verdant head,
> Dear to the Muse the beechen shade,
> United form a calm retreat
> From glowing summer's raging heat.[12]

But Mary Leadbeater had a placid, cheerful temperament. She had felt deeply the distresses of the rebellion, and was later concerned at the recurring possibilities of famine, but she was a devout woman with a trust in God. She recovered her interest in the daily humorous events of common life. Her friendship with Melesina Trench, who owned estates near Ballitore and who put Mrs. Leadbeater in charge of her tenantry, gave her greater opportunity for getting to know the Irish peasantry. Her *Cottage Dialogues of the Irish Peasantry* and *Cottage Biography,* didactic and mildly humorous works, are the result of this knowledge. She was interested in the popular folk-lore and superstitions of the people, and carefully noted, for instance, the mock burial of a child born on Whitsunday. For a child born on this day was thought to be born "either to kill or be killed." To cheat this fate, the baby was put in a shallow grave, lightly sprinkled with earth, and covered with sods supported by twigs. On the child's "resurrection," he was supposed to be free from the curse.[13] In a letter to Melesina Trench written in 1822 she tells the story of a former Earl of Kildare who practised the art of enchantment in his castle at Kilkea. Being a comely man, he married a beautiful bride who was devoted to him, but curious about his magic. She told him she had heard that he could transform himself into any form, and asked him to change his shape for her. He warned her that if she became frightened he would be obliged to leave her and never come back; but she said he would never frighten her, whatever shape he assumed. He then changed himself into an eel, and, winding himself around the castle, looked into the window at his bride. She was so terrified by the eel's horrible face that she screamed against her will, and the earl flew away. He is obliged to ride round and round the Curragh of Kildare on a white horse with silver shoes until the shoes wear through, and then he will be allowed to return to his castle. When Mrs. Leadbeater

[12] *Ibid.*, I, 20.

[13] *Ibid.*, I, 413.

heard the story the horse's shoes were supposed to be as thin as sixpences.[14] Perhaps by this time the earl is reposing peacefully after his long ride.

No doubt the trees of Ballitore grew up again, although they were probably never as verdurous as in the old days. Once more Mary Leadbeater could describe the town in almost idyllic terms. Writing in 1818 to George Crabbe, with whom she had renewed her old acquaintance, she said, "Have I given too partial an account of our little community? Ask those who visit Ballitore, who quit it with regret, and return to it with delight, some of whom call it 'The Classic Vale,' others, 'The Happy Vally' —they all agree that we live like one large family."[15] And, in the midst of this large family, with her own little family growing up around her, Mary Leadbeater lived the rest of her life, and, in 1826, died, and was buried at Ballitore; where, no doubt, her spirit mingles with the others that, so she said, were supposed to haunt the meeting-house grove. The course of her life had been truly forecast in these lines from her poem, *Ballitore:*

> Here from the busy world retired,
> The fragrant air I first inspired,
> And here may all my days be spent
> With innocence and sweet content. . . .
>
> Remote from envy, care, and strife,
> Calm shall I pass my quiet life,
> Taste purer joys when these are o'er,
> And lay my bones in Ballitore![16]

[14] *Ibid.*, II, 321-2. [15] *Ibid.*, II, 359. [16] *Ibid.*, I, 26.

THE KNIGHT'S TALE AND THE *TESEIDA* AGAIN

H. S. WILSON

THE KNIGHT'S TALE is a masterpiece, and one of the surest evidences of its greatness lies in the fact that it has prompted study and criticism from a great many different points of view.[1] If a work of literature is truly great, it can receive no definitive critical treatment. It will prove perennially fascinating to successive generations of readers and out of its abundant riches will stimulate redoubled labours among scholars to elucidate the conditions of its genesis and fresh interpretative insights suited to the taste and understanding of its critics. Scholars may try to adjust the reading of the work to what they can agree upon as the conditions of the *milieu* that brought it forth and what they thus infer to be the intention of the author, historically determined. But for those who delight in literature, there will remain a certain "liberty of interpreting,"[2] unconfined by the fiats of the learned, that is of the essence of the literary experience.

This may serve as apology and caveat for the present essay, which follows the often-travelled road of comparison between *The Knight's Tale* and its principal source, the *Teseida* of Boccaccio, in the attempt to describe the effect that Chaucer's poem has produced upon one reader. If the writer does not altogether heed the counsel of the poet Callimachus, "Not to travel along roads crowded with chariots nor to follow the tracks of others, but rather to penetrate paths hitherto untrodden, to discover fresh and pure sources and to pluck new flowers,"[3] he may still hope to struggle through the press of larger vehicles in his path with a few unfaded blooms gathered from the inexhaustible sources of two great artists.

I

Boccaccio's *Teseida* is a long poem in *ottava rima* designed to follow the pattern of classical epic; it runs to twelve books and more than 9,000 lines of leisurely narrative. As might be supposed in such a pioneer attempt to domesticate the form of classical epic in the Italian vernacular,[4] the *Teseida* bears only superficial resemblances to Boccaccio's models, the

[1]The reader may find the bibliographical and critical matter relating to the poem most conveniently reviewed by Robert A. Pratt in *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales,* ed. W. F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster (Chicago, 1941), 82-105; and in the same author's supplementary study, "Chaucer's Use of the *Teseida*" (*Publications of the Modern Language Association,* LXII, 1947, 598-621).

[2]See Lascelles Abercrombie's address, "A Plea for the Liberty of Interpreting" (*Proceedings of the British Academy,* XVI, 1930, 137-164).

[3]See J. W. H. Atkins, *Literary Criticism in Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1934), I, 179, who gives the translation.

[4]The poem is generally assigned to 1339-40, the period when Boccaccio was studying the *Thebaid* of Statius; see Henri Hauvette, *Boccace* (Paris, 1914), 90. This was some ten years before Boccaccio's first recorded meeting with Petrarch and before Boccaccio came appreciably under Petrarch's influence. For Boccaccio's claim to have introduced the classical epic in the Italian vernacular, see *Teseida,* XII, 84-5.

Aeneid and the *Thebaid*—in the elaborate mythological setting, the epic battles, and such set pieces as the funeral games at the tomb of Arcita in Book XI. The poem derives likewise from the *Roman de Thèbes*. But essentially it is the story of Boccaccio's love for the lady whom he called Fiammetta, a story which he repeated in divers forms and from divers points of view in all his earlier works, from the *Filocolo* to the *Fiammetta,* between March 30, 1336 (the memorable date, as he records it, on which he fell in love with Fiammetta) and the time, seven or eight years later, when he finally abandoned the hope of being reconciled to his faithless love. During this period, Boccaccio wrote the succession of romances in which the theme of his love for Fiammetta, his betrayal, and his continuing hope of being restored to her favour provides a piquant if sometimes puzzling thread of personal allegory and gives to each of these works, in varying degrees, the emotional intensity and subtlety of psychological analysis for which Boccaccio is famous. The *Teseida* is the third work of this series.

In the first of these, the *Filocolo,* Boccaccio tells his story diffusely and without much finesse in a prose version of the romance of Florio and Biancofiore that too frequently lapses into plaintiveness and dullness. In the *Filostrato* that followed, however, he achieved a treatment of his theme in verse that was brilliantly successful. He cast himself as the Troilo of this romance and concentrated upon a half-playful, half-malicious analysis of the lady's character and her motives in betraying him, with the memorable portrait of Criseida.[5] In its epic form, the *Teseida* was a more ambitious undertaking and it was conceived in a different mood and from a very different point of view. Here the lady was to be idealized and represented as the object of the lover's humble and devoted striving, "piú tosto celestiale che umana figura," as Boccaccio's prefatory letter, addressed to Fiammetta herself, puts it.[6] It was obviously Boccaccio's intention to invest his theme with something like epic dignity, by means of what he took to be the proper classical machinery; but his main interest was in the love story, and it was written for the lady's sake, as a record of their former love and a plea for the lover's restoration to favour. "That the work was written for you," Boccaccio tells Fiammetta in his prefatory letter, "you will readily perceive from several details. . . . What is related concerning one of the two lovers and concerning the beloved, if you will remember,

[5]The present writer is not concerned with the controversy concerning the extent to which the facts of Boccaccio's personal experience can be read in his romances. It is clear enough that these early romances do illustrate something of Boccaccio's relations with Fiammetta, if only the imaginative projection of his moods towards her.

[6]The text of Boccaccio's poem here followed is that of the "Scrittori D'Italia" series (*Teseida delle Nozze D'Emilia,* a cura di Aurelio Roncaglia, Bari, 1941). This edition, and the critical edition of Salvatore Battaglia (Florence, 1938), supersede the text in the Moutier edition of Boccaccio's *Opere Volgari* (Florence, 1831). The English summary of the action of the *Teseida,* made long ago by Thomas Tyrwhitt, has proved convenient for generations of Chaucer scholars, but it affords no real clue to Boccaccio's purpose, method, and tone in the poem. A more useful summary by R. A. Pratt is given in *Sources and Analogues,* 93-105. There is an analysis of the poem in G. Koerting, *Geschichte der Litteratur Italiens im Zeitalter der Renaissance* (Leipzig, 1880), II, 593-628.

represents in part what you and I have been to each other. In which of the two lovers I am figured I need not say, for I know you will recognize him. If there are a few superfluous traits, this is because of the exigencies of the plot I follow and because it is fitting thus to veil our story from vulgar curiosity."[7]

Boccaccio begins his story with an elaborate background of the war of Theseus with the Amazons.[8] Having subdued Ippolita, the queen of the Amazons, Theseus marries her and at length proceeds to Athens with his bride and her young sister Emilia.[9] There he finds suppliants, widows of heroes who have fallen in the war of the Seven Against Thebes. The widows implore Theseus' aid against the tyrant Creon, who has exposed the bodies of their husbands outside the walls of Thebes. Theseus quickly overcomes the Thebans, punishes Creon, and returns in triumph to Athens, bringing as his captives the Theban princes Palemone and Arcita, doomed to perpetual imprisonment. This lengthy preliminary to the main narrative occupies the first two books of Boccaccio's poem.

From their prison window, Arcita catches sight of Emilia gathering flowers and singing in the garden below, and draws the attention of Palemone to her. Both princes are stricken by Cupid's dart; it is May, the season most fitting for love. Since the two prisoners suppose that they are hopelessly prevented from winning the lady, they share their admiration of her and comfort each other in their forlorn plight, without thought of rivalry. As summer draws on, however, Emilia ceases to come into the garden. The unhappy prisoners are at length separated through the intercession of Theseus' friend Perithous for Arcita, whom Theseus agrees to release on condition that he avoid Theseus' dominions henceforth upon pain of death. To Arcita, his lot seems as bitter as that of Palemone who remains a prisoner, as the two princes take a sorrowful and affectionate farewell of each other. Arcita leaves Athens in October and wanders disconsolately through various parts of Greece for more than a year, until at length the love of Emilia draws him to brave the risk of discovery in returning to Athens. Changed in appearance by his sorrow and under the assumed name of Penteo, he enters the service of Theseus, where he passes unrecognized by any save Emilia, who innocently wonders at his temerity but discreetly keeps her discovery to herself.

Before Arcita can advance his suit with Emilia, Palemone learns of his

[7] *Teseida*, p. 3.

[8] The poem takes its name from Theseus as the character of highest rank who, though not the centre of the action, presides over its development. The fuller title given by Roncaglia (see note 6, above), which is found in Boccaccio's own manuscript of the poem, indicates the two kinds of interest, epic and romantic, which the poem contains.

[9] *Teseida*, I, 128:

> e piú bella che rosa di verziere
> con lei veniva una chiara fantina,
> Emilia chiamata, al mio parere,
> d'Ippolita sorella picciolina.

The extreme youth of Emilia is thus early emphasized, a fact which in part accounts for her inexperience and *naïveté* in the poem. She was scarcely fifteen when she married Palemone, at the end (XII, 64).

return—a servant of Palemone has overheard Arcita bewailing his love in an adjoining wood. Palemone now becomes jealous of Arcita, and, escaping from his prison, goes armed to the wood where Arcita is accustomed to utter his love-plaints. Palemone appeals to Arcita in the name of their friendship to renounce his love for Emilia; Arcita remonstrates; and they oppose equally ardent professions of their love for the lady. Palemone then challenges Arcita to fight for her. Arcita protests that neither of them will be better off, no matter what the outcome of their struggle, but Palemone is obdurate that they must fight it out to the death, and with sad reflections upon the tragic destiny that has followed the house of Thebes from its beginnings, Arcita prepares for battle. As they fight on horseback with swords (for they have no lances), Arcita gives Palemone a terrible blow which causes him to fall from his horse striking his head, and he lies stunned. Thinking him dead, Arcita unlaces his helmet and bitterly laments that he has killed his comrade in a quarrel that was none of his making. But Palemone starts up and renews his fierce challenge, and the ire of Arcita now kindles in earnest. Before they can harm each other further, Emilia, following the chase, comes upon them and summons Theseus to part them. Theseus, when he learns all the circumstances of their quarrel, pardons the two lovers and proposes to settle their rivalry in a tournament of a hundred knights on each side, to take place within the ensuing year, a proposal which the princes joyfully accept.

The assembling of the friends of Arcita and Palemone gives occasion for a review of the heroes of ancient myth. The day before the combat, Arcita, Palemone, and Emilia offer prayers to Mars, Venus, and Diana, respectively. Arcita prays to Mars for victory in battle; Palemone beseeches Venus that he may win the lady—the means he leaves to the goddess; and Emilia timidly requests of Diana that she may be spared the importunities of both princes, or, if this is not to be, that she may have the lover who desires her more: she herself is unable to choose between them.[10] The prayers of Arcita and Palemone are acknowledged with omens that they take to be favourable, but Diana informs Emilia that she will fall to one of the princes, whose identity the goddess cannot reveal.[11]

In the battle next day, Arcita is victorious through a mischance that befalls Palemone. The horse of Cromis, one of Arcita's supporters, fixes his teeth in Palemone's arm and he is with difficulty rescued from the

[10]*Ibid.*, VII, 85:

> E se l'iddii forse hanno giá disposto
> con etterna parola che e' sia
> da lor seguito ciò c'hanno proposto,
> fa che e' venga nelle braccia mia
> colui a cui piú fermezza mi disia,
> ché io nol so in me stessa nomare,
> tanto ciascun piacevole mi pare.

[11]Boccaccio does foreshadow the outcome, however, in the symbolism of the two fires burning upon Diana's altar (VII, 91). The flame which Emilia designates for Palemone first dies and then flames up; that of Arcita shows an opposite fate. But the significance of these tokens Emilia does not observe.

savage animal, only to be disarmed by Arcita, to whom the victory is then adjudged. At this point, Emilia, hitherto impartial, kindles with love for Arcita, and, regarding his beauty and his prowess, thinks him superior to Palemone. But Venus, mindful of the prayer of her suppliant Palemone, adjusts the outcome with Mars. She sends the fury Erinis to startle the horse of Arcita, who is mortally injured by the fall he receives. He is borne in honour to Athens, with the sorrowing Emilia by his side, and there, on his death-bed, marries her. Before his death, however, Arcita begs Theseus to grant that Palemone may inherit all his goods and marry Emilia. Both Palemone and Emilia refuse to recognize the inevitability of his death: "Live in honour with her whom you have won," says Palemone, "and let me wander through the world miserable, as fate directs."[12] But Arcita gently insists. "Palemone has loved you as faithfully as I have," he tells Emilia, "and is more worthy in valour than I; though victory fell to me the other day, it was no destined victory but the fruit of Palemone's mischance. The gods have made an error; and now, discerning it, they are taking me that Palemone may have you, as they have all along designed."[13]

When Arcita dies, his soul is translated to the eighth sphere. On earth, the grief of Emilia and Palemone knows no bounds. Emilia implores heaven that she may follow Arcita in death; Palemone sacrifices his hair and his beard, arms and jewels on Arcita's funeral pyre. Theseus provides an elaborate funeral ceremony in Boccaccio's best classical manner, replete with funeral games, and Palemone builds a magnificent temple, decorated with Arcita's history, in which his ashes repose. Emilia is at first inconsolable. But after a few days had passed, it was the general opinion that sorrow should be abandoned and the wish of Arcita fulfilled—that Emilia should marry Palemone. Theseus summons them and presses the desirability of their union upon them in turn. Though Palemone's love for Emilia remains constant, he is scrupulous of Arcita's memory and feels it necessary to resist the proposal with earnest protestations; at length his scruples are overcome. Emilia pleads to dedicate herself henceforth to Diana; but Theseus tells her plainly that her beauty is ill suited to such a course, and she too is prevailed upon to lay aside her grief. All is turned to splendour and rejoicing as the nuptials take place.

Though we do not enjoy the advantages of Fiammetta for interpreting Boccaccio's personal references in the *Teseida,* we may well find Arcita the more sympathetic of the two heroes. His behaviour in the duel in the wood is the more reasonable and magnanimous, and he suffers through no fault a rebuff of fate which he turns into a noble act of reconciliation and renunciation. Palemone is noble, too, but he gets his reward: and while we may feel satisfaction at the outcome of the story, our sympathy and admiration have been, perhaps, more thoroughly enlisted for Arcita.

But if it was Boccaccio's intention that Fiammetta should recognize him in the Arcita of the *Teseida,* he has been most skilful in veiling this

[12] *Teseida,* X, 48-50. [13] *Ibid.,* X, 61-2.

intention from his other readers. The commentators have generally complained of the lack of differentiation between the two heroes, and few have ventured, like the downright Hauvette, to identify Boccaccio dogmatically with Arcita.[14] The balance between the two heroes is held remarkably even throughout the tale. Though Boccaccio's Arcita sees and loves Emilia first, he never presses the priority of his claim. Boccaccio pictures the two princes as falling in love together and sharing the same sentiments toward the lady; and at the end of the story, Arcita, in recommending Palemone to Emilia, emphasizes that Palemone has loved her as long and as faithfully as he has.[15] Nor is the superior merit or deserving of Arcita unequivocally established. True, he behaves better in their duel in the wood, and he does win the lady in the subsequent tournament—by a stroke of fortune. But Palemone atones for his earlier jealous vindictiveness by the humility with which he accepts the outcome of the tournament and by his scrupulousness of Arcita's memory; and Palemone fits the terms of Emilia's prayer to Diana that she may fall to the one who loves her best.[16] If Arcita appears the nobler in his act of renunciation at the end, this act was the expression of his nobility of character in a situation contrived by fate. So far as we may judge from the closely similar characters of the two friends, had Palemone chanced to be in Arcita's position at the end, he might have done the same thing.

Throughout his story, Boccaccio dwells upon the devoted friendship of Palemone and Arcita. Their love for Emilia divides them temporarily but does not really injure their love for each other; if anything, it refines it. Thus it will not do to say that the theme of Boccaccio's story is the conflict between friendship and love—whatever the case may have been with the romance that Professor Ker imagined to have figured among Boccaccio's sources for the *Teseida*.[17] This conflict indeed figures in the story; but it is not introduced until Book V (with the return of Arcita to Athens) and it is resolved and made part of a larger design in the climax of reconciliation in Book X. There is no question of moral responsibility or choice in the

[14]*Boccace*, 98. Hauvette emphasizes the resemblances between Arcita's sufferings in love and those of Florio in the *Filocolo* and of Troilo in the *Filostrato*, taking the two latter as unequivocally representing Boccaccio's sufferings for the love of Fiammetta. On the other hand, F. Torraca (*Per la biografia di G. Boccaccio*, Naples, 1912) denies all possibility of reading Boccaccio's personal experience in the romances. On the question of identifying Boccaccio with one of the two lovers of the *Teseida*, V. Crescini (*Contributo agli studi sul Boccaccio*, Turin, [1887], 215), Koerting (*Geschichte*, II, 618 n.), and others, refuse to express an opinion. Among English commentators, R. A. Pratt (*PMLA*, LXII, 603) identifies Boccaccio with Arcita, while J. H. Whitfield (*Modern Language Review*, XXXIII, 22) has argued for the identification with Palemone. On the whole question, see S. Battaglia, "Elementi autobiografici nell'arte del Boccaccio" (*La Cultura*, IX, 1930, 241-54).

[15]*Teseida*, X, 61:

> Palemon, caro e stretto mio parente,
> non men di me t'ha lungamente amata, ecc.

[16]*Ibid.*, VII, 85; see note 10 above.

[17]W. P. Ker, *Epic and Romance* (2nd ed.; London, 1931), 364. The literary sources of the *Teseida* are still to some extent a matter of speculation; see R. A. Pratt (*PMLA*, LXII, 599 n.).

behaviour of the two heroes throughout the story, and therefore there can be no question (from an uninstructed reader's point of view, at least) which of the two lovers "deserved" to win the lady. This was precisely the condition of the tale as Boccaccio conceived it: if he had a preference between Palemone and Arcita, he tried deliberately to conceal this preference from all save Fiammetta—with notable success, as the disagreements of the commentators demonstrate.

Since we cannot pretend to fathom Boccaccio's private motives, we may look at the story as Boccaccio surely meant us to, as a story of how two noble princes and devoted friends happened, without any volition in the matter, to fall in love with the same woman. Equally moved by passion, they inevitably came into conflict; and fate decided that one should conquer but lose his love in victory, that the other should win the lady but without honour. At each crucial stage of the action, it is the agency of the gods and the working out of the impersonal design of destiny that Boccaccio emphasizes. The point is that the passion of love is not subject to the requirements of human justice or even of the truest friendship, and that the lover is rewarded or thwarted without reference to his claims or his merits, but as Fortune rules. Within this frame of reference, the behaviour of all three principals in the love story is exemplary; the outcome, however, is not what they propose but what fate decides.

One would hardly call Boccaccio a philosophical poet. Yet there is a thought-pattern discernible in his early romances, a very simple one, barely adumbrated in the *Filostrato* and *Teseida,* emerging with increasing clarity in the *Ameto* and *Amorosa Visione.* It is a view of the relationship between the flesh and the spirit, between human love and the divine. In the pastoral *Ameto,* the very fleshly cult of Venus issues in an allegory of the Divine Love which is represented as the fulfilment toward which the passions of earthly lovers tend. In *L'Amorosa Visione,* the poet's imaginative contemplation of his lady's image is the prelude to a dream in which his conquest of the lady leads to the realization that this earthly love is the sister of his guide to the Divine Love, and that Fiammetta can fulfil the offices of both!

In the *Teseida,* this theme is hardly explicit, not even clearly realized, perhaps; nevertheless, the beginnings of it are foreshadowed in the culmination of the story, where the dual nature of love as Boccaccio conceived it is represented in the diverse fates of the two heroes, one of whom experiences the bliss of earthly love and the other of the heavenly.

Boccaccio's preoccupation with this theme is doubtless to be attributed in some part to his regard for Dante and the *dolce stil nuovo;* and however far he may be from sharing the mystical feeling that inspired the *Vita Nuova* and the *Paradiso,* there can be no doubt of his whole-hearted admiration for Dante and his wish to imitate his example, however haltingly. According to the simple view expressed in Boccaccio's early romances, there is no conflict between the earthly and the heavenly love: the one is

but an imperfect aspect of the other, the earthly love an exquisite but often heart-rending preparation for the love that lies beyond life and so far transcends our earthly measure that human loves seem petty by comparison. So it is that Arcita, translated to the eighth sphere, looks down upon the world of human passion and striving that he has left,

> e seco rise de' pianti dolenti
> della turba lernea, la vanitate
> forte dannando dell'umane genti,
> li quai, da tenebrosa cechitate
> mattamente oscurati nelle menti,
> seguon del mondo la falsa biltate,
> lasciando il cielo; e quindi se ne gío
> nel loco che Mercurio li sortio.[18]

The translation of Arcita is expressed in appropriate mythological terms to conform with the archaic setting of the *Teseida*. Throughout the poem, Boccaccio is consciously archaizing, and he is at some pains to translate his Christian point of view into appropriately pagan references to fate and fortune, in conformity with the antique setting and classical form of his story. We may observe the method Boccaccio followed in the commentary he provided to accompany the poem, a commentary which consists of explanations of points of learning and a few guides to the interpretation of particular passages in the text.[19] Thus Book IX opens with the lines:

> Giá s'appressava il doloroso fato,
> tanto piú grave a lui a sostenere, ecc.

which Boccaccio glosses, "cioè la dolorosa provendenza di Dio per Arcita."[20] But there is no reference to Providence in the poem itself. On the contrary, the shaping power behind the action is referred to in the text as "l'alta ministra del mondo Fortuna,"[21] the will and agency of the gods,[22] or fate.[23] It looks as if Boccaccio regarded the conception of fate presiding over and directing the action as part of the classical decorum of his epic design but supposed that his readers would easily provide the correction of "Providence" throughout.[24]

Boccaccio, of course, is not mainly interested in the philosophical design of the *Teseida*—if one may call it that; his main interest lies in the study of the passions, and throughout the poem he particularizes the hopes and fears,

[18]Chaucer transfers this passage to the end of *Troilus and Criseyde*, where he renders it, as applying to the soul of Troilus:

> And in hymself he lough right at the wo
> Of hem that wepten for his deth so faste;
> And dampned al oure werk that foloweth so
> The blynde lust, the which that may nat laste,
> And sholden al oure herte on heven caste.
> And forth he wente, shortly for to telle,
> Ther as Mercurye sorted hym to dwelle. (V, 1821-7)

[19]*Teseida*, pp. 371-465. [20]*Ibid.*, p. 439. [21]VI, 1. [22]VII, 85 ff.

[23]IX, 1 ff., X, 64, etc. There are, it is true, incidental references to heaven and hell (e.g., X, 104, 107), but these are casual and not connected with the conception of the directing power behind the action.

[24]In the *Ameto* and *L'Amorosa Visione*, where Boccaccio is not treating an archaic theme, the point of view is entirely orthodox.

the jealousies and raptures of his lovers with prolix subtlety and care. Nevertheless, his conception of the role of fate or Providence in human affairs gives form and meaning to his study of these very passions. His view is that love is an irresistible force which shapes human conduct in ways that are often past our understanding, and that the part of nobility and wisdom lies in submitting humbly to God's will. In the *Teseida,* Palemone, Arcita, and Emilia are all essentially passive, despite the protests and recriminations and strivings of the two heroes; and in their ultimate acceptance of what the gods send is seen to consist their nobility, their pathos, and their happiness in this world or the next.

In view of this design, it is hardly just to blame Boccaccio for not having distinguished more sharply the characters of the two princes, or for having made Emilia a heroine without a will of her own. This was the kind of story that Boccaccio set out to tell, a story of how two heroes, equal in virtue, loved a woman ideally beautiful, desirable, and impartial towards both of them. It was a condition of the allegory that the author's preference (if he had one) between Palemone and Arcita should be concealed from all save the lady to whom he addressed the poem, and hence that there should be no basis for the reader to choose between their merits. It was equally a condition that Emilia should be unable to choose between her two lovers until fate seemed to decide for her, and that, having chosen wrong, she should be amenable to correction. But more than this, the essential nobility of all three principals was a condition of the whole story, in which the ennoblement of human passion is shown as resulting from its conflict with the irresistible design of fate. The ironic reversals which all three characters experience bring out the best that is in them. The pathos of the death of Arcita is not more significant than the reconciliation of all three lovers before his death, and the discipline in sorrow and humility of Palemone and Emilia that precedes their final union. The solution is right as a whole, and the climax transcends the measure of a simple love story and approaches the plane of philosophical generalization. The individuality of the characters is neglected in the interest of this larger design. Palemone and Arcita are human enough in their passions and sufferings, but they are distinguished from each other chiefly in their diverse fates. Emilia is a shadowy figure, no doubt; but there is a fine artistic decorum in her gentle passivity and pliability—qualities which Boccaccio could reveal in action when he chose, as in the Criseida of the *Filostrato,* but which here he deliberately subordinated to the requirements of his larger design. This design we must pay attention to throughout, if we are to grasp the meaning and the full effect of the story.

II

It is the contention of this study that Chaucer read Boccaccio's story of Palemone and Arcita in something like the manner that has just been described. Because he perceived the awkwardness of Boccaccio's epic

machinery as a framework for the tale, he decided virtually to discard it for his own purposes; at the same time he saw the advantages of substituting astrological influences for the pagan gods and the Boethian conception of Providence for Boccaccio's "dolorous fate."

Professor R. A. Pratt considers it unlikely, on the basis of a comparison of Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale* with the surviving manuscripts of the *Teseida,* that Chaucer's own manuscript contained Boccaccio's commentary;[25] it is in any case unnecessary to speculate about his precise motives for making the various changes he incorporated in his own version of the story. Once he had decided to abandon Boccaccio's "epic" technique, it would be natural enough for him to adapt the story in other ways to suit his own taste and convictions. The various changes Chaucer made in adapting the *Teseida* for *The Knight's Tale* have been often studied,[26] and there is no need to review them in detail here. He radically altered Boccaccio's epic design by reducing it to the proportions of a four-part narrative which develops the theme dramatically, from the situation or protasis (the "question for lovers" with which part one concludes) through an epitasis or development of the action to a point of crisis in part two (the preparations for the tournament which is to decide things) to the catastrophe in part four, which is provided with a peripeteia and anagnorisis in what might be considered the most authentic fashion prescribed by Aristotle. Part three marks a pause in the forward movement of the action calculated to amplify its significance by providing a sumptuous setting for the climax and relating it more definitely to the astrological forces which are conceived as the instruments of Providence in a story that is conducted on two planes, the human and the divine. It is a masterly design, beside which the prolix and sprawling twelve books of Boccaccio must appear inept, for all the charm of particular passages.

Chaucer made a great many other changes in details of Boccaccio's story calculated to fit it to the taste of himself and his English readers. He indefinitely lengthened Boccaccio's time-scheme,[27] for instance, doubtless to give what he considered a more becoming impression of the devotion and

[25]See *Sources and Analogues,* 87, n. 2, and the same author's separate study, "Conjectures regarding Chaucer's Manuscript of the *Teseida*" (*Studies in Philology,* XLII, 1945, 745-63).

[26]See, among other studies, S. Robertson, "Elements of Realism in *The Knight's Tale*" (*Journal of English and German Philology,* XIV, 1915, 226-55); H. M. Cummings, *The Indebtedness of Chaucer's Works to the Italian Works of Boccaccio* (Cincinnati, 1916), 123-46; W. C. Curry, *Chaucer and the Mediaeval Sciences* (New York, 1926), 119-63. The most useful recent study is that of R. A. Pratt (*PMLA,* LXII, 598 ff.), who traces the increasing use Chaucer made of the *Teseida* from the earliest evidence of his acquaintance with it in *The House of Fame* through a number of his following poems and especially in *The Knight's Tale.*

[27]The events of Boccaccio's story, from the imprisonment of the two princes to the marriage of Palemone and Emilia, cover about three and a half years; in Chaucer, Palamon languishes in prison for seven years before the fight with Arcite in the wood, and Palamon and Emelye mourn "certeyn yeres" (A 2967) after the death of Arcite before they are persuaded to marry.

"servyse" of his courtly lovers. Professor Robertson has studied the many touches by means of which Chaucer rendered the manners and especially the militant exploits of his knights more familiar to his English audience; and most of the lore of astrology and all the matter from Boethius are of course Chaucer's additions to the story.

What the present study is rather concerned with is Chaucer's central conception in *The Knight's Tale*—or perhaps one had better say, the present writer's interpretation of that conception. It has already been suggested that Chaucer followed Boccaccio in holding the balance even between the two heroes and in representing all three principals of the story as submitting to the direction of an irresistible power, changing Boccaccio's artificial "fate" to the Boethian idea of Providence. Certain changes which Chaucer made in the conduct of the story, however, have led some commentators to suppose that Chaucer did intend to represent one of the princes as more deserving than the other; and since the point is vital for the present argument, it must be considered at length.

Chaucer develops the conflict between Palamon and Arcite almost from the beginning of his story. Whereas Boccaccio represents Arcita as the first to catch sight of Emilia and fall in love with her, and Palemone as not becoming jealous of Arcita until the tale has advanced to the fifth book, Chaucer gives the precedence in loving Emelye to Palamon and dates the quarrel of her rival lovers from the outset of their love. Some commentators have accordingly supposed that Chaucer meant thus to provide an outcome in accordance with "poetic justice" when Palamon eventually marries Emelye and that we should regard Palamon as having the superior claim to win the lady, if not the superior merit as well.[28]

Chaucer's view of this matter is, I think, sufficiently clear in the terms of the opening quarrel between the rivals. When Palamon first catches sight of Emelye in the garden below the prison window, he exclaims in a Virgilian rapture:

> "I noot wher she be womman or goddesse,
> But Venus is it soothly, as I gesse."
> (A 1101-2)

When Arcite chimes in with an expression of his feelings, Palamon thus reproaches him:

> "I loved hire first, and tolde thee my wo
> As to my conseil and my brother sworn
> To forthre me, as I have toold biforn.
> For which thou art ybounden as a knyght
> To helpen me, if it lay in thy myght,
> Or elles artow fals, I dar wel seyn."
> (A 1146-51)

[28]See Cummings, *The Indebtedness of Chaucer's Works to Boccaccio*, and J. R. Hulbert, "What was Chaucer's Aim in *The Knight's Tale?*" (*SP*, XXVI, 1929, 375-85).

To this Arcite retorts:

> "Thow shalt . . . be rather fals than I;
> And thou art fals, I telle thee outrely,
> For paramour I loved hire first er thow.
> What wiltow seyn? Thou wistest nat yet now
> Wheither she be a womman or goddesse!
> Thyn is affeccioun of hoolynesse,
> And myn is love, as to a creature;
> For which I tolde thee myn aventure
> As to my cosyn and my brother sworn. . . ."
> (A 1153-61)

Now this is a sophistry, for they both know very well that Palamon's exclamation was but a poetical figure, though as an answer to Palamon's claim of precedence based upon his having seen the lady a split second or two before Arcite it might do well enough. But Arcite immediately follows this weak argument with another that is not a sophistry but goes straight to the heart of the matter:

> "I pose that thow lovedest hire biforn;
> Wostow nat wel the olde clerkes sawe,
> That 'who shal yeve a lovere any lawe?'
> Love is a gretter lawe, by my pan,
> Than may be yeve to any erthely man;
> And therfore positif lawe and swich decree
> Is broken al day for love in ech degree.
> A man moot nedes love, maugree his heed.
> He may nat fleen it, thogh he sholde be deed,
> Al be she mayde, or wydwe, or elles wyf. . . ."
> (A 1162-71)

This is Chaucer's view of the issue between them, as it is Boccaccio's. It is not a question of love versus friendship, nor even of love versus justice, for the reason that the claims of love and of friendship or justice are unequal. Everyone knows that natural law takes precedence of positive law when the two come in conflict and that in these cases it is not merely that one ought to follow natural law but that one has to. Arcite is here the clearer thinker of the two, and Palamon can make no answer.

> "Love, if thee list, for I love and ay shal;
> And soothly, leeve brother, this is al,"
> (A 1183-4)

concludes Arcite. This is the sum of the matter in Chaucer. They are equal in their merits, in their claims (whatever Palamon may think of the matter), and, as Arcite further insists, in their lack of opportunity for winning the lady; and this is the note, likewise, on which Chaucer concludes the first stage of the action:

> Yow loveres axe I now this questioun,
> Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamoun?
> That oon may seen his lady day by day,
> But in prison he moot dwelle alway;
> That oother wher hym list may ride or go,
> But seen his lady shal he nevere mo.
> Now demeth as yow liste, ye that kan,
> For I wol telle forth as I bigan.
> (A 1347-54)

In the bout between the rivals in the wood, Palamon still vigorously insists upon the priority of his claim to Emelye, but this claim and the greater hardship of imprisonment that he has suffered are balanced by Arcite's generous behaviour. In Boccaccio, our sympathies are wholly solicited for Arcita at this point. Chaucer holds the balance between the two heroes more even by making Palamon bitterly reproachful: "Arcite, false traytour wikke," he cries, and goes on to elaborate his burning sense of Arcite's injustice and double-dealing. But Arcite's behaviour completely belies his accusations. He is the pattern of knightly courtesy, restraint, and generosity, as he firmly repudiates Palamon's charges and proceeds to make his offer to provide Palamon with weapons and return to fight him in secret. Palamon's charge of falseness against Arcite is a dramatic means of representing the bitterness of Palamon's frustrated passion at this point.[29] But if either of the antagonists is to be blamed, it is rather Palamon for his stubborn unwillingness to acknowledge Arcite's magnanimity.

Here, then, is the essential situation. It is not a competition of rival merits that is being presented to us but an *exemplum* of the power of love which overrules all fellowship, even that of the truest of knights and devoted friends. The force of the *exemplum* depends upon our seeing the antagonists as *equally* illustrating this theme.

The account of the tournament in part four emphasizes the equality of the antagonists throughout. Chaucer describes the opposing forces of the rival lovers as they face each other:

> In al the world, to seken up and doun,
> So evene, withouten variacioun,
> Ther nere swiche compaignyes tweye;
> For ther was noon so wys that koude seye
> That any hadde of oother avauntage
> Of worthynesse, ne of estaat, ne age,
> So evene were they chosen, for to gesse.
> (A 2587-92)

Palamon and Arcite are likewise equal in embattled ardour. In the ensuing conflict they unhorse each other and still fight dauntlessly, until at length

[29] What Chaucer intended to make of "false Arcite" in *Anelida and Arcite* is anyone's guess. Clearly, it has no bearing on the interpretation of the character of the same name in *The Knight's Tale*.

(since every conflict must have an issue) the king Emetreus wounds Palamon while he fights with Arcite, and Palamon is drawn to the victor's stake, struggling fiercely, by the force of twenty men. Victory has fallen to Arcite, but there has been no dishonour in Palamon's defeat, as Chaucer is at pains to emphasize.[30] Everyone salutes the triumph of Arcite, and Emelye looks upon him encouragingly

> For wommen, as to speken in comune,
> Thei folwen alle the favour of Fortune.[31]

But the fury sent from Pluto at Saturn's request startles Arcite's horse, and the victor falls, mortally wounded.

In the reconciliation that follows, Arcite, on his death-bed, summons both Emelye and Palamon. He speaks tenderly of his love and philosophically of his approaching end, and earnestly he commends Palamon to Emelye as a true and gentle knight who has well deserved to have her:

> "I have heer with my cosyn Palamon
> Had strif and rancour many a day agon
> For love of yow, and for my jalousye.
> And Juppiter so wys my soule gye,
> To speken of a servaunt proprely,
> With alle circumstances trewely—
> That is to seyn, trouthe, honour, knyghthede,
> Wysdom, humblesse, estaat, and heigh kynrede,
> Fredom, and al that longeth to that art—
> So Juppiter have of my soule part,
> As in this world right now ne knowe I non
> So worthy to ben loved as Palamon,
> That serveth yow, and wol doon al his lyf.
> And if that evere ye shul ben a wyf,
> Foryet nat Palamon, the gentil man."
> (A 2783-97)

In this reconciliation, the lovers are brought to recognize the vanity of jealousy and hatred. All three of them are at last united in love.

In Boccaccio, the outcome is attributed to the operation of fate. Chaucer shifts this emphasis to conform with the idea of Christian Providence, through his own comments and those of Theseus, the arbiter of the action. Early in the story, he states the Christian point of view as he takes it from Boethius and Dante:

[30] A 2719-30.

[31] A 2681-2. Chaucer's Emelye, however, is even more impalpable and impartial than Boccaccio's, if that is possible. Chaucer neutralizes her to the extent of omitting Boccaccio's comment upon her feminine vanity (III, 29-30) and her reproaches of her beauty for having provoked the strife (VIII, 96 ff.). Chaucer's Emelye is a wholly passive figure whose beauty sets in operation the laws of love but who takes no active part in shaping their course. She is "Emelye the brighte," remote and impartial, all but disembodied, an idea of all that is gracious and lovely rather than a recognizable heroine subject to human passions and imperfections. Again, Chaucer's intention is perfectly clear: for it would be absurd to suppose that he could not have brought her to life had he seen fit to do so.

The destinee, ministre general,
That executeth in the world over al
The purveiaunce that God hath seyn biforn,
So strong it is that, though the world had sworn
The contrarie of a thyng by ye or nay,
Yet somtyme it shal fallen on a day
That falleth nat eft withinne a thousand yeer.
For certeinly, oure appetites heer,
Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,
Al is this reuled by the sighte above.
(A 1663-72)

Theseus sums it up again at the end:

"The Firste Moevere of the cause above,
Whan he first made the faire cheyne of love,
Greet was the'effect, and heigh was his entente. . . ."[32]

Chaucer's story has illustrated the vanity of human aims and passions; but it has a happy ending, because Divine Providence turns even our human imperfections and follies to ultimate good. It is not a story of poetic justice, of the more deserving lover rewarded and the less deserving thwarted. As Chaucer tells it, it is a story of how the Divine Love providentially works through imperfect human love to a higher end. The theme is implicit in Boccaccio's *Teseida;* Chaucer developed it and made it central in *The Knight's Tale,* and this is his greatest improvement upon his source.

There remains the question, for some readers, at least, of Chaucer's irony. Did Chaucer mean us to take the story of Palamon and Arcite as seriously as this? Professor H. R. Patch detects a tone of "something rather like levity" in *The Knight's Tale* and suggests that the story of the love of Palamon and Arcite interested Chaucer chiefly for the sake of its humour: "With remarkably simple technique Chaucer's story gives us the irony of young men in their tremendous concern for a young lady"; and he notices that even the pathos of Arcite's death is lightened by the wonderful lament of the Athenian women:

"Why woldestow be deed," thise wommen crye,
"And haddest gold ynough, and Emelye?"[33]

This is ever Chaucer's way, and one would not deny the play of his comic irony over all his work, even at moments when the unsuspecting reader may be least prepared for it. But Chaucer can be serious too. Professor Patch goes to some length to defend Chaucer from the charge of cynicism; he himself sometimes comes close to suggesting that Chaucer was merely frivolous. There is no irony in the conclusion of *Troilus* nor in Chaucer's attitude toward Boethius. In a poem like *The Knight's Tale,* so closely related in mood to the one and in matter to the other, we shall not go wrong in taking him seriously.

[32] A 2987 ff. The passage is too long for full quotation. The conception, taken from Boethius, is associated with Jupiter by Theseus, the speaker, for reasons of decorum, but Chaucer's audience would read it as Christian doctrine.

[33] *On Rereading Chaucer* (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), 205-9.

The Knight's Tale is a comedy, ending on a note of reconciliation and rejoicing; and no doubt the mood of such a tale is lighter throughout than is the tragic story of Troilus and Criseyde. But at his greatest, Chaucer, like Shakespeare, never writes "pure" comedy or "pure" tragedy. He sees the comic ironies of life even in its moments of tragedy, and his pathos is never sentimental, nearly always it is relieved with a smile. The Athenian women lamenting the death of Arcite are somewhat like the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* admiring the merits of that "man of wax," the County Paris; yet the scene is tragic enough. And Chaucer's tale of Palamon and Arcite and their love for the fair Amazon Emelye, like the last plays of Shakespeare, for all its exquisite touches of comedy has its own high seriousness too.

MORAL PROGRESS IN GOETHE'S *FAUST*

CECIL LEWIS

THE Second Part of Goethe's *Faust* has from its first appearance excited strong disagreement among the critics. Does it fit together with the First Part to form a continuous and unified whole? Is there a clear idea consistently worked out in the two parts?

Almost at the beginning of *Faust* criticism, George Henry Lewes, an ardent admirer of the poet, condemned the Second Part as strongly as he praised the First. He declared that the "two poems" were separate and distinct, not two parts of one poem. The Second Part was "of mediocre interest, very far inferior to the First Part and both in conception and execution an elaborate mistake." He had not even the patience to complete the analysis of the action, and ignored entirely the long closing scene. Seventy years later, Benedetto Croce expresses, albeit more tolerantly, the same attitude. He, too, considers the two parts to be separate. The Second Part is

> the play of imagination of an old artist, henceforth master of innumerable figures and situations drawn from reality and from literature, who is glad to make them pass through his mind again, toying with them; and it is the wisdom of the man, experienced in the world and in human thought, who has already witnessed so many mental and moral vicissitudes, and without for this reason becoming sceptical or callous, has rather saved for himself a strong faith of his own. He is no longer roused to excessive enthusiasm or to violent contempt. His wisdom is often softened by a smile. Even his faith he expresses discreetly, sometimes borrowing a jesting tone. . . . It is not a lamentable document of the senile decay of a genius, but a crackling of sparks when a great fire dies out, the rich close of a superlatively rich poetical and mental life.

German criticism, which before 1900 was decidedly less favourable to the Second Part than to the First, has since tended to place it on at least the same level and almost always insists upon the fundamental unity and consistency of the work as a whole. The word "Faustian," as employed by such writers as Spengler, has come to mean restless dynamism, and all the old admiration for such masterful figures as Frederick the Great and Napoleon has been concentrated upon the legend of a Faust engaged in a titanic struggle towards ever greater heights. Rickert and others have devoted very great reasoning powers to the task of presenting a fully coherent drama in which the hero rises steadily out of error into the realm of pure and selfless activity. In the last twenty years the more popular interpretation has been that of Faust as a ruthless egoist whom it was our duty somehow to admire. There have, fortunately, been some who have refused to bow down to such a Faust. Ulrich von Hassell, a man of noble character who gave his life in the struggle against Hitler, writes in his diary during 1942: "I saw a fascinating performance of *Faust,* Part Two. Never before have I perceived so clearly the complete fiasco of Faust on earth, who

ethically and aesthetically has need of grace from on high in order to be saved. At the moment when his collapse is perfectly clear, he says: 'To complete this, the greatest of works, one mind suffices for a thousand hands.' An idiotic section of the audience applauded."

Let it be said at once that orthodox criticism does not support this far too common popular reading of the character of Faust. It believes in "an ever higher and purer activity of Faust—eine immer reinere und höhere Tätigkeit," as Goethe expressed it to Eckermann. According to this view, Faust in the whole of the First Part is a Titan involved in tragedy, who in the Second Part undergoes a gradual purification till at the end he becomes both human and humane and calls up a vision of men living in freedom. Faust's upward striving is declared to be proved by the Prologue in Heaven and the closing scene, *Bergschluchten,* a kind of epilogue in Heaven. Faust's career is said to show unmistakable moral progress. Even in the later portion of the Gretchen drama the critics see the beginnings of repentance and in Act I, Scene II, of the Second Part a high resolve to go on struggling upwards. There is much disagreement as to the meaning of the remainder of Act I, and of the whole of Acts II and III, but there is almost complete agreement that the practical labours of Faust in the last two acts show him making steady moral progress, so that he wins his wager and enters Heaven. So much for the orthodox view. There are less favourable opinions, shading off to the complete rejection of Faust in his moral aspect by Christoph Schrempf and Wilhelm Böhm.

These discords tempt us to review the poem in order to discover its meaning. Our first rule should be to look at the poem itself and to disregard as irrelevant and confusing all that Goethe said, or is alleged to have said, outside the poem as to his intentions. Most of the commentators have made great play with what was dragged out of Goethe in letters and conversations over many years. Often these scattered remarks have been taken at their face value, despite the fact that in some cases their validity as evidence is in doubt. In the last phase of his life Goethe suffered the penalty of his fame and was hard put to it to ward off the questions which threatened to embarrass his freedom at a time when the poem was still far from complete. His replies are often playful, sometimes impatient, and in general leave the impression that he wished to avoid being drawn into the alien element of plodding ratiocination. There is some evidence, too, that he wished to renounce any claim to hold, as poet, any special authority in the interpretation of his work. He knew that poets write much by instinct and that instinct defies analysis. Hence the inconsistency of so many of his observations. Eckermann says that Goethe approved his description of *Faust* as a series of self-contained episodes strung upon a thread, but in a talk with Luden, Goethe explicitly and resentfully objected to the image of pearls strung upon a thread. Again, he is reported to have said: "The harder it is to measure a poetical production and to grasp it with the understanding, the better—je inkommensurabler und für den Verstand unfasslicher eine

poetische Produktion, desto besser." Yet he greatly enjoyed a French translation of the First Part because "in the French language, which enlivens everything and facilitates thought and understanding, the poem looks much clearer and more thought-out—so nimmt es sich in der französischen, alles erheiternden, der Betrachtung, dem Verstande entgegenkommenden Sprache schon um vieles klarer und absichtlicher aus." He goes on to say how baffling he has always found and still finds the poem when he takes out the uncompleted manuscript again after a long interval.

Let us look at the poem itself. In the first draft, the Urfaust of 1775, we have three main themes, of which only two are connected. Faust, the young scholar and teacher, is disgusted with the science and learning of his time. There is satire upon university life. In the company of Mephistopheles, Faust pursues and seduces Gretchen. There is no link between the Gretchen theme and the other two, and the character of the relations between Faust and Mephistopheles is not explained.

The first published form is the Fragment of 1790. It contains two new scenes, *Hexenküche* and *Wald und Höhle,* and the last four scenes are omitted. Various slight modifications are perhaps intended to push back the work from the author's own time to the sixteenth century, but there is still no explanation of the connection between the two main characters. The omission of the tragic ending shows that he was beginning to think of extending the scope of the drama.

In the period 1797 to 1801, Goethe took the decisive steps which committed him to a broad plan for the relation of Faust to God and to Mephistopheles, for the rounding out of the First Part as it now stands, and for the career of Faust in the Second Part. All the evidence suggests that at this time Goethe was clear about his main intentions, though doubtful of his ability to fulfil them. He now wrote the Prologue in Heaven, which in a measure changes Faust from an individual with strictly personal character to a symbolic figure, the object, though he knows it not, of a struggle between the forces of good and evil. It also takes from the poem the possibility of a tragic outcome and makes of it an epic rather than a true drama.

Mephistopheles appears in Heaven and pours scorn upon man. At the Lord's mention of Faust, the devil describes him in terms which tally closely with those employed by Faust himself in the scene *Vor dem Tor.* He says of him:

> Vom Himmel fordert er die schönsten Sterne
> Und von der Erde jede höchste Lust,

a close parallel to Faust's words about the two souls within his breast, the one cleaving to this earth, the other soaring powerfully aloft.

As Satan "obtaineth leave" to tempt Job, so Mephistopheles obtains leave to tempt Faust. There is no wager, despite the flippant use of the word by the devil. The song of the Archangels shows that the Lord is all-

wise and all-powerful, and that the Supreme Being should engage in any undertaking of which he does not know the outcome is impossible. God tacitly accepts the description of Faust's restless dissatisfaction and allows Mephistopheles to try to draw him away from his primal source—Zieh diesen Geist von seinem Urquell ab. The Lord says that he who strives will commit error—es irrt der Mensch so lang er strebt. He is serenely confident that he will lead Faust out of confusion into clarity, for a good man with his obscure impulses is well aware of the right road—

> Ein guter Mensch in seinem dunklen Drange
> Ist sich des rechten Weges wohl bewusst.

And God justifies his tolerance of Mephistopheles by the need to spur and incite man to activity.

The words of Faust in his study fully justify the expectations we have formed. He despises the ways of traditional learning and yearns for immediate and complete illumination. That is his higher side. The other is expressed immediately in his longing for money and property, for worldly honour and glory. We see also his pride and arrogance in his bitter despair over his rebuff by the Earth-Spirit and in his fierce contempt for Wagner, who for all his comic pomposity is a worthy man and zealous student.

The pact scene dates from about the same time as the Prologue. Mephistopheles describes himself in terms very like those used by the Lord. He is the spirit of denial—ich bin der Geist der stets verneint; he is a part of that force which ever desires evil and ever creates the good—

> Ein Teil von jener Kraft,
> Die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft.

Faust is still under the influence of nature, which has refreshed and invigorated him in the scene *Vor dem Tor*. He therefore rebukes Mephistopheles for his nihilism:

> So setzest du der ewig regen,
> Der heilsam schaffenden Gewalt
> Die kalte Teufelsfaust entgegen,
> Die sich vergebens tückisch ballt!
> Was Anders suche zu beginnen,
> Des Chaos wunderlicher Sohn!

Mephistopheles realizes that Faust is not yet the man to hold the devil fast. He therefore taunts him, deepening the sense of his frustration, widening the gulf which he feels between his present life and his ideal, and leading him to utter his comprehensive curse upon all those comforting illusions which enable him to support an existence which he has rejected as worthless. His mind is too lofty to be content with this meaningless, trivial life, and so he utters the words of the wager. "If ever I fall into indolence, if ever you can beguile me into satisfaction with myself or deceive me with enjoyments, let that be my last day. If ever I say to the moment, 'Stay, thou art so fair,' then you may put your shackles upon me and I will gladly perish"—

Werd ich beruhigt je mich auf ein Faulbett legen,
So sei es gleich um mich getan!
Kannst du mich schmeichelnd je belügen
Dass ich mir selbst gefallen mag,
Kannst du mich mit Genuss betrügen,
Das sei für mich der letzte Tag!
Die Wette biet ich. . . .
Werd ich zum Augenblicke sagen,
Verweile doch! du bist so schön!
Dann magst du mich in Fesseln schlagen,
Dann will ich gern zu Grunde gehn!

Taking the pact with the rest of the scene, we have a succession of paradoxes: Faust concludes a pact, though he is convinced of its uselessness; he is willing to perish if ever he finds life worth living; he calls on Mephistopheles to satisfy him, but wagers that he never will be able to satisfy him. At every subsequent stage of the poem it is a problem of baffling complexity to decide whether or not Faust has lost the wager. If he dwells for long in the highest and purest rapture or sinks to the lowest pleasures, he ought equally to be lost, and it is for the reader each time to contrive his own sophistries to justify the prolongation of the poem. In this way tons of commentary become inevitable. For thirty years Goethe himself forgot the pact. In Act V of the Second Part he studied it once more and tried to harmonize the ending with the terms of pact and Prologue.

We can pass over quite rapidly the long and primarily comic interlude which precedes the Gretchen scenes. Faust remains inactive during the *Schülerscene,* with its youthful satire upon Leipzig in the era of Gottsched. In the completed *Faust* the scene *Auerbachs Keller,* amusing though it is, shows only, as we should expect, that the elderly savant is not interested in the pleasures of the beer-table. It explains the need for the rejuvenation of Faust which takes place immediately afterwards in the *Hexenküche* and leaves him susceptible to female beauty.

Now comes the Gretchen tragedy, which in spite of minor obscurities fits reasonably well into Goethe's new plan. Faust begins the adventure with the cold-blooded desire to enjoy. Almost immediately, when he enters her room in her absence, he is deeply moved by the aura of her personality and rises to a nobler feeling of love. Here there is the sense of struggle between Faust and Mephistopheles or between the higher and lower in Faust himself. Twice he seems to be in danger of losing his wager: first when he yearns "to yield utterly and feel a rapture that must be everlasting"—

Sich hinzugeben ganz und eine Wonne
Zu fühlen, die ewig sein muss!—

and again, at the opposite extreme, when he becomes involved in the lewdness of the Walpurgisnacht. Even though he befogs Gretchen's mind with his beautiful casuistry about religion, even though he seduces and, in the words of Professor Fairley, criminally deserts her, we feel, in spite of all,

that he may yet renew his struggle and that the words of the Lord may yet be justified.

We come now to the Second Part. It is impossible to fit it completely and satisfyingly into the dramatic scheme laid down in the pact and the Prologue. Yet we are forced to make the attempt. The first scene, *Anmutige Gegend,* raises our hopes. It is the healing of Faust after the agonies of the prison scene. Ariel commands his spirits to remove the pricks of self-reproach and to cleanse his soul of horror. As they do so, they exhort him to enter once more upon a bold career:

> Säume nicht dich zu erdreisten,
> Wenn die Menge zaudernd schweift;
> Alles kann der Edle leisten,
> Der versteht und rasch ergreift.

The magnificent description of the glorious Alpine dawn most powerfully renews our confidence that Faust will strive on, and, as he awakens, he himself says:

> Du regst und rührst ein kräftiges Beschliessen,
> Zum höchsten Dasein immerfort zu streben.

The fulfilment of our hope is long delayed. We are taken to the Imperial Court to witness the masquerade and the intervention of Mephistopheles in affairs of state. There is much very pretty verse, and the livelier portions are very amusing, but Faust is absent or inactive, and the poet's very slight dramatic purpose is to create, through experiments with paper money, the political chaos which in Act IV will enable Faust to assist the Emperor and thus obtain as a reward his grant of land. There follows the conjuration of Helen. Here Faust again shows the immoderacy of his desire and again shows himself to be a Titan when he ignores Mephistopheles' warning, rushes to seize Helen, and is flung insensible to the floor.

The second act, for all its variety of interest, has even less to do with the main thread. We have Mephistopheles' witty satire upon the self-esteem of the Baccalaureus; we have also the creation of Homunculus. The *Classische Walpurgisnacht,* a vast prelude to the third or Helena act, shows us Faust in search of ideal beauty, Mephistopheles in search of ideal ugliness, and Homunculus in search of a body. There are also long passages of charming nature myths in which neither of the chief characters is present.

Faust's second great experience follows in Act III, with its splendid re-creation of Greek drama, the union between Faust and Helen symbolizing the blending of classic and romantic, and the brief meteoric career of their son, Euphorion, who reflects in an intensified form the wild impetuousness of his father. The critics disagree as to the meaning of this act in the career of Faust. Does this experience represent a temptation and a danger? Is Helen real or a mere dream-figure? Does the experience represent, in Schiller's sense, the "aesthetic education" of Faust for the great practical

tasks of his last years? Thus it may seem that we may still approve the verdict pronounced by Carlyle when this *Zwischenspiel zu Faust* appeared in 1827 as the first instalment of the Second Part: "*Helena* is not an Allegory but a Phantasmagoria; not a type of one thing, but a vague, fluctuating fitful adumbration of many. This is no picture painted on canvas, with mere material colours, and steadfastly abiding our scrutiny; but rather it is like the smoke of a wizard's cauldron, in which, as we gaze on its flickering tints and wild splendours, thousands of strangest shapes unfold themselves, yet no one will abide with us; and thus, as Goethe says elsewhere, 'we are reminded of Nothing and of All.' "

Act IV brings us back with startling suddenness to the long-interrupted main action. Mephistopheles, renewing his temptation, offers Faust all the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them in the shape of a flourishing realm with stately palaces and gardens. He rejects the offer, for he prefers great deeds, having in him the strength for bold endeavour. From now to the end of the drama, Faust holds the centre of the stage. It is his deeds and his progress which are the sole concern of the poem. There is in him so much of struggle and of error that we feel powerfully the poet's desire to round off his work and establish a grand harmony between its parts.

Faust speaks with passion. He is irked by the spectacle of the waste of nature's powers, of the purposeless swaying of the sea in ebb and tide. He would dam back the arrogant waters. But another paradox. He rejects enjoyment, but promises himself bliss in the exercise of despotic power. And now, with the magic aid of Mephistopheles, he renders those warlike services to the Emperor which obtain for him the grant of a fief and the right to enter upon his great project.

Then comes Act V. Its first scene, *Offene Gegend,* shows the devoted old couple, Philemon and Baucis, in conversation with the returned Wanderer whom they had long ago saved from shipwreck and to whom they describe the work of reclamation of the land and the settling of a teeming population. Philemon is moved to admire the great achievement, but his wife censures frankly the godless Faust who has carried out the task, by the aid of magic and of forced labour, at a furious speed. Immoderate as ever, he now yearns, she says, for their cottage and garden. All has been accomplished, we are told, with the sanction of the Emperor, and behind him, we know, stands the Church.

When Faust appears, he is as ruthless as Baucis has led us to expect. It is made clear that he has engaged in piracy, that he has adopted Mephistopheles' maxim, might is right, and that he is as intolerant and unsatisfied as ever. He orders the forcible removal of the old couple, who are to be compensated with land of his choosing. Goethe does not veil his judgment upon this proceeding, for Mephistopheles makes explicit reference to Naboth's vineyard. We are not surprised when Mephistopheles and his ruffians exceed their orders and bring about the death of these innocents. Faust's repentance is most perfunctory. He prefers to thrust the blame upon

his servants. The poet is facing with perfect honesty the fact that Faust is even more callous and ruthless than before.

Now he is approached by the four Grey Women, Want, Guilt, Care, Distress. Want and Distress have no power over the rich man. His microscopic sense of guilt he has just brushed arrogantly aside. Care alone can attack him. We now witness at least the beginnings of repentance. He begins to sum up his existence and to desire freedom. He has never known true ease and freedom of mind except in the presence of nature, in *Vor dem Tor,* in the beginning of *Wald und Höhle,* and in the Alpine scene. Therefore he desires to renounce all magic aids and to be but a man once more, confronting nature with his own unaided powers. He retracts the curse upon life and when Care returns he maintains the brave resolve to resist her alone. In the great speech which follows, he admits the vanity of desire and denies the possibility of enlightenment upon transcendental things. He resolves to concentrate upon his earthly task and to strive forward unsatisfied, through happiness and torment. The speech is the beginning of wisdom in the thoughts it expresses, but in the manner of its expression, in its contemptuous intolerance, it shows unabated the old immoderacy:

> Ich bin nur durch die Welt gerannt;
> Ein jed' Gelüst ergriff ich bei den Haaren,
> Was nicht genügte, liess ich fahren,
> Was mir entwischte, liess ich ziehn.
> Ich habe nur begehrt und nur vollbracht
> Und abermals gewünscht und so mit Macht
> Mein Leben durchgestürmt; erst gross und mächtig,
> Nun aber geht es weise, geht bedächtig.
> Der Erdenkreis ist mir genug bekannt,
> Nach drüben ist die Aussicht uns verrannt;
> Tor! wer dorthin die Augen blinzelnd richtet,
> Sich über Wolken seinesgleichen dichtet!
> Er stehe fest und sehe hier sich um;
> Dem Tüchtigen ist diese Welt nicht stumm.
> Was braucht er in die Ewigkeit zu schweifen!
> Was er erkennt, lässt sich ergreifen.
> Er wandle so den Erdentag entlang;
> Wenn Geister spuken, geh' er seinen Gang,
> Im Weiterschreiten find' er Qual und Glück,
> Er, unbefriedigt jeden Augenblick!

Care renews the attack. She is more powerful now than when she tormented him in the days before the pact. She makes him physically blind in order to harass him the more, but she cannot deaden his will to struggle on. Blind though he is, he turns with energy to his task and urges on his men, incorrigible in his egocentricity:

> Dass sich das grösste Werk vollende,
> Genügt *ein* Geist für tausend Hände.

Surely Ulrich von Hassell is right in saying that at this late stage Faust reveals his collapse. Mephistopheles sees the end coming at any moment,

as come it must to a strenuous old man of a hundred who has suddenly cast from him the prop and stay of a lifetime! The grave is secretly preparing. Faust works with ever more feverish urgency. He is still piling up guilt—Bezahle, locke, presse bei! Thus he is still prepared to make use of slave-labour. A few moments later he utters his last words, and now, at long last, he has attained a worthy vision of the future. This new land is to be the home of millions, living, not indeed in security, but in activity and freedom. Now, and only now, in the last moments of his earthly career, does he rise to the conception of a true community of men wresting life by their common voluntary efforts from those perils of the sea which will always beset them:

> Das ist der Freiheit letzter Schluss:
> Nur der verdient sich Freiheit wie das Leben,
> Der täglich sie erobern muss.
> Und so verbringt, umrungen von Gefahr,
> Hier Kindheit, Mann und Greis sein tüchtig Jahr.
> Solch ein Gewimmel möcht ich sehn,
> Auf freiem Grund mit freiem Volke stehn.
> Zum Augenblicke dürft ich sagen:
> Verweile doch, du bist so schön!
> Es kann die Spur von meinen Erdentagen
> Nicht in Äonen untergehn.—
> Im Vorgefühl von solchem hohen Glück
> Geniess ich jetzt den höchsten Augenblick.

He has bidden the moment stay. To object that he has merely pointed to a future possibility is only a quibble. He has shown that it is in his nature to enjoy and to wish to prolong such a moment. He has lost his wager with the devil. In these last words he is still hugging his ego, glorying in the thought of lasting fame. He who had said that the deed was everything, fame was nothing, has fallen a prey to that self-satisfaction which, in the wager, he had disdained. It is clear that his spiritual progress on earth is very late and very slight indeed.

Surely we must disagree with those critics, and they are the majority, who see Faust steadily rising to higher things throughout the poem. Some few others deny progress of this kind, and among these Wilhelm Böhm declares that Goethe had no other intention than to show the moral bankruptcy of the Titan Faust. Perhaps it is permissible to take a middle position among the spirits who deny, and to suggest that it was Goethe's purpose, anyhow at the end or towards the end, to show Faust well launched on the road to moral betterment. The words of the Lord, "Ein *guter* Mensch in seinem dunklen Drang" make it impossible to believe otherwise. Faust has passed through three great experiences. The Helena act is so shadowy that we can make nothing of it in terms of Faust's character, but in the Gretchen episode and the land reclamation project he has stormed along ruthlessly, as he has himself admitted. The change from selfish exploiter to leader of a free people occurs with such startling suddenness as to suggest, not a

gradual and credible process of enlightenment and purification, but an inexplicable lightning conversion. Saul has become Paul; Hitler, in the twinkling of an eye, has been transformed into Roosevelt. No wonder that Mephistopheles hopefully does battle with the angels for the soul of his victim. But Goethe evidently remembered the ancient tradition that in his dealings with the Lord the devil is an ass. Mephistopheles has forgotten that the Lord had expressed his serene resolve to save Faust. So the angels proclaim:

> Gerettet ist das edle Glied
> Der Geisterwelt vom Bösen,
> "Wer immer strebend sich bemüht,
> Den können wir erlösen."
> Und hat an ihm die Liebe gar
> Von oben Teil genommen,
> Begegnet ihm die heilige Schar
> Mit herzlichem Willkommen.

For he is assumed by the Divine Grace and the power of Gretchen's intercession into Heaven, though he is still imperfect and still bears the stains of earth upon him. And there he begins at once to grow and to rise to higher spheres, and so the poem ends.

Faust, then, has lost the wager and been rescued by the Lord, in keeping with the arrangement in the Prologue, because he has striven. It has been mere striving, mere feverish activity, when he was active at all, and only at the last has it been coloured by even the faintest tinge of moral purpose since the day of the pact. Before the pact we are full of the sense that he really had striven, and striven mightily, in the search for truth. His rejection by the Earth-Spirit is surely symbolic of his failure to fathom the secrets of nature after years of tireless study. His subsequent career decidedly does not convey this sense, at any rate not until near the very end. His contribution to the land reclamation is not clear. That seems to have been encompassed by magic, and the man who employs magic rather than the labour of his own brain and hand may be said to be sprawling most comfortably upon a "bed of ease." Between his renunciation of magic and his last words on earth there are 150 lines. And this in a work of 12,000 lines! Surely, if it was Goethe's purpose to depict moral regeneration, he was guilty of the gravest disproportion in the ordering of the poem.

The great majority of the critics do not admit it. They toil away at the task of showing Faust rising to ever greater heights in portions of the work where it is plain that he does nothing of the kind. On the other hand, Wilhelm Böhm rejects all thought of progress. Faust, he says, represents the dignity of human error, he always errs in a dignified way, and therefore he both needs salvation and is worthy of it!—"er ist erlösungsbedürftig und erlösungswürdig." That ignores too many clear statements in the poem itself. No, magnificent old man though he was, Goethe left the Second Part too late fully to master the problem of achieving a just proportion. He had

long foreseen the possibility and had expressed his misgivings in the *Vorspiel auf dem Theater,* written in the great middle period of his life, when he was probably clearer than at any other time as to his purpose with the poem. This Prelude is divided between the Dichter, the Direktor, and the Lustige Person, and we recall that Goethe in his time was both manager of the theatre at Weimar and a participant in its productions. The two latter are in league against the poet; they represent jointly the Mephistophelian spirit of denial seeking ever to draw him away from the sources of his inspiration. They tell him crudely and bluntly to use mass-effects; every spectator will pick out his own choice of titbits. Most cynically they add that a dramatic piece should be offered in pieces. Such a hash, easily planned and easily served, is bound to be a popular success:

> Die Masse könnt ihr nur durch Masse zwingen,
> Ein jeder sucht sich endlich selbst was aus.
> Wer vieles bringt, wird manchem etwas bringen;
> Und jeder geht zufrieden aus dem Haus.
> Gebt ihr ein Stück, so gebt es gleich in Stücken!
> Solch ein Ragout, es muss euch glücken;
> Leicht ist es vorgelegt, so leicht als ausgedacht.
> Was hilft's, wenn ihr ein Ganzes dargebracht,
> Das Publikum wird es euch doch zerpflücken.

The poet flames out passionately in defence of his high calling, the highest that is known to man. He it is who gives meaning to the ceaseless flow of events; he it is who peoples Olympus with the gods. He cries out in despair for the days of his youth, for that unbroken rush of song, for deep joy and pain, for the force of hate and the power of love. In vain. His taskmaster and tormentor has the last word, and that is significant. He bids him bend his energies and force himself into the poetic mood:

> Gebt ihr euch einmal für Poeten,
> So commandiert die Poesie.

All this means that Goethe knew his own dilatoriness and knew, too, that in nearly all the works whose writing was spun out over the years he was apt to lose the thread and to turn a poem or a novel, perhaps integral in its first conception, into a repository for matter which was alien in form or substance or spirit to its earliest purpose. His clearest works are those produced quickly in the glow of a first inspiration. Thus it was with his incomparable *Werther*. His *Iphigenie* was, in all but its metrical form, substantially the result of the first few weeks of his work upon it. His *Hermann und Dorothea* occupied him but little longer. The lyric poems, on the whole the most magnificent of all his achievements, nearly all came quickly with effortless spontaneity and in astonishing profusion. When he delayed, as so often he did, his artistic conscience seems to have deserted him, and there is nearly always some grave flaw in the substance or the form. In the *Wahlverwandtschaften,* which is full of profound thought and beautiful expression, we are astonished to find that the diary of Ottilie, a girl of

nineteen without bent for study, is stuffed with the ripest reflections of the sixty-year old author. His *Wanderjahre,* the belated attempt to complete his *Wilhelm Meister,* he made the dumping-ground for a variety of unrelated topics.

Goethe knew it himself, as the Prelude shows, and he allowed this Prelude to stand, even after he had added the last line to his vast poem a generation later. Listen to his unconscious judgment upon the want of harmony and coherence which must result from such spasmodic methods as he had employed in his *Faust.* He is not speaking of any work of his own, but expressing violent objection to the word *"Komposition"*: "It is a mean abject word which we ought to try to get rid of as soon as possible. How can anyone say that Mozart *composed* his *Don Juan?* Composition! As if it were a piece of cake or biscuit, made by stirring together eggs, flour and sugar. It is a spiritual creation; as a whole and in its details it is the outpouring of one single spirit and is penetrated with the breath of *one* life; and he who produced it made no capricious, piecemeal essays at it. No, the daemonic spirit of his genius held him in its power so that he must perforce obey its command."

The *Faust* poem is a thing of fits and starts, a gorgeous omnium gatherum huge enough to contain as mere episodes the intellectual torments of a great spirit, a great and poignant love tragedy, and the recreation of the world of Greek beauty. The greater glories lie in the First Part, in the wild tempestuous longing for knowledge and experience. The Second Part again and again excites the hope that the thread of the action has not been lost. But it does not fully carry out the grand design. To try to follow the labyrinthine course of its hero is fascinating. A greater fascination is to trace, with what knowledge and insight we may, the growth, not of the erring Superman Faust, but of the poem and the poet himself, and it is thus that we may best read the famous line:

Am farbigen Abglanz haben wir das Leben.

THE RHETORIC OF T. H. HUXLEY

WALTER E. HOUGHTON

FOR anyone so obviously devoted to controversy and propaganda, Huxley enjoyed a reputation for candour and sincerity that seems almost incredible. We can scarcely believe that the self-appointed champion of science, writing in an age of bitter religious controversy, and endowed with both pugnacity and a flair for style, could have resisted the temptation to use rhetorical sophistries of one kind or another. And use them he did, and with all the more success because, by great good luck, he had managed to acquire a reputation for simple honesty and plain speech which disarmed the usual caution of critics, as well as of general readers, on approaching polemical literature.

This good fortune (is there any better, or rarer, for a partisan?) was ultimately derived from his well-known championship of freedom of inquiry, and his complementary scorn of hypocrisies and evasions.[1] He became something like an apostle of veracity to a generation which found itself caught between belief and unbelief, and often forced, by social pressures or psychological fears, into insincerities as distasteful to them as they now seem to us. His enthusiastic reception in America in 1876 was primarily given to the champion "of freedom and sincerity in thought *and word* against shams and self-deceptions of every kind. It was not so much the preacher of new doctrines who was welcomed, as the apostle of veracity."[2] This conception of his style, no less than of his thought, was explicitly affirmed by James Routh in 1902: "The most marked thing about his style is its clearness and sincerity. The man looks you straight in the eyes and speaks with a frankness and an earnestness which come from the bottom of the soul and carry conviction—a conviction of the absolute truthfulness of the man, if not of the soundness of his doctrine."[3] Clearness, and therefore sincerity, that is a second clue to Huxley's reputation. It is because his writing seems, and often is, so lucid and direct in diction and structure, so apparently free from artifice and elaboration, that it escapes the suspicion of rhetorical motivation. In Leonard Huxley's account of his father's style, we can see the identification of honesty and clarity which is now so firmly established in Huxleyan criticism.

[1]See, for example, his "Autobiography," in *Method and Results* (New York, 1898), 16; his famous letter to Charles Kingsley, in Leonard Huxley, *Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley* (New York, 1901), I, 237-8; or, for a typical sentence, "Universities: Actual and Ideal," in *Science and Education* (New York, 1898), 205: "The very air he breathes [the student in an ideal university] should be charged with that enthusiasm for truth, that fanaticism of veracity, which is a greater possession than much learning; a nobler gift than the power of increasing knowledge; by so much greater and nobler than these, as the moral nature of man is greater than the intellectual; for veracity is the heart of morality."

[2]Leonard Huxley, in *Life and Letters,* I, 494. The italics are mine.

[3]James E. Routh, Jr., "Huxley as a Literary Man" (*Century Magazine,* LXIII, 1902, 393).

Have something to say, and say it, was the Duke of Wellington's theory of style; Huxley's was to say that which has to be said in such language that you can stand cross-examination on each word. Be clear, though you may be convicted of error. If you are clearly wrong, you will run up against a fact some time and get set right. If you shuffle with your subject, and study chiefly to use language which will give a loophole of escape either way, there is no hope for you.

This was the secret of his lucidity. . . . In him science and literature, too often divorced, were closely united; and literature owes him a debt for importing into it so much of the highest scientific habit of mind; for showing that truthfulness need not be bald, and that real power lies more in exact accuracy than in luxuriance of diction.[4]

It is not surprising that this passage was quoted with approval in Aldous Huxley's lecture of 1932 on "T. H. Huxley as a Man of Letters," for that paper, though otherwise an able analysis of Huxley's style, is, in this respect, uncritically traditional:

His passion for veracity always kept him from taking any unfair rhetorical advantages of an opponent. The candour with which he acknowledged a weakness in his own case was always complete, and though he made full use of a rich variety of literary devices to bring home what he wanted to say, he never abused his great rhetorical powers. Truth was more important to him than personal triumph, and he relied more on a forceful clarity to convince his readers than on the brilliant and exciting ambiguities of propagandist eloquence.[5]

Finally, it is not difficult to support this association of honesty, clarity, and rhetorical restraint from Huxley's own remarks. For one thing, he was always quick to condemn the use of oratorical devices by any of his contemporaries. The *Quarterly* reviewer of *The Origin of Species* dealt with Mr. Darwin, he charged, "as an Old Bailey barrister deals with a man against whom he wishes to obtain a conviction, *per fas aut nefas,* and opens his case by endeavouring to create a prejudice against the prisoner in the

[4]*Life and Letters,* I, 319-20. The same point of view is echoed through the textbooks and anthologies: see, for example, Hugh Walker, *The Literature of the Victorian Era* (Cambridge, 1940; 1st ed., 1910), 233-4; *Readings from Huxley,* ed. Clarissa Rinaker (New York, 1934; 1st ed., 1920), xxiii-xxiv; *Essays by Thomas H. Huxley,* ed. Frederick Barry (New York, 1929), xvii; Julian M. Drachman, *Studies in the Literature of Natural Science* (New York, 1930), 292. Justin McCarthy, *A History of Our Own Times, from the Accession of Queen Victoria to the General Election of 1880* (New York, n.d.), II, 634, found Huxley's style "free from any effort at rhetorical eloquence"; but that it had "all the eloquence which is born of the union of deep thought with simple expression and luminous diction." The extreme position is taken by P. C. Mitchell, *Thomas Henry Huxley* (New York and London, 1900), 216: "The more closely you analyse his pages the more certainly you find that the secret of the effect produced on you lies in the gradual development of the precise and logical ideas he wished to convey, . . . in fact, in the arts of the convinced, positive, and logical thinker, who knew exactly what he meant you to know and who set about telling you it with the least possible concern for the words he used or for the sentences into which he formed his words." This is fantastic. It would be much truer to say that Huxley relied on "the arts of the convinced, positive, *rhetorical* thinker" and that he took "the *greatest* possible concern for the words he used."

[5]p. 14. The lecture, which was originally printed separately in London, 1932, has been included in the *Huxley Memorial Lectures, 1925-1932,* edited by the Imperial College of Science and Technology (London, 1932).

minds of the jury."[6] Of Mr. Balfour, apropos of *The Foundations of Belief,* Huxley observed that he was a good debater who knew "the value of a word. The word 'Naturalism' has a bad sound and unpleasant associations. It would tell against us in the House of Commons, and so it will with his readers."[7] Mr. Gladstone forgot that the "rhetorical artifices" which had brought him "fame and honour" in politics, had long ceased to take effect in "the region of letters or of science," where readers now find that "mere dexterity in putting together cleverly ambiguous phrases, and even the great art of offensive misrepresentation, are unspeakably wearisome."[8] The implied difference from Huxley's own methods is affirmed in a number of protestations. He has had to be content through life, he confesses in the "Autobiography," "with saying what I mean in the plainest of plain language."[9] When W. S. Lilly accused him of gilding his teaching with rhetorical ornaments, he replied with righteous indignation that "rhetorical ornament is not in my way, and that gilding refined gold would, to my mind, be less objectionable than varnishing the fair face of truth with that pestilent cosmetic, rhetoric."[10] Such pronouncements, coming as they do from one whose reputation for sincerity was so well established, naturally added their weight to the critical tradition, and confirmed the impression of candour which the apparent simplicity of his style so readily produces.[11]

Not, of course, that this impression is always wrong. It is right enough in such descriptive essays as "A Piece of Chalk," "A Lobster," or "Animal Automatism." But when Huxley turned from straight exposition to generalizations about the values of science or religion, usually their relative values, and to cognate passages on scientists and clergymen, he was by no means reluctant to bolster a shaky or a biased argument, or even to support a good one, with the extra-emotional influence of rhetorical methods. Broadly speaking, he makes use of two in particular, exaggeration and insinuation.

I

For illustration of the former, we may turn first to some passages on science from the lecture "On the Advisableness of Improving Natural Knowledge." Huxley's main thesis is introduced as follows:

[6]From "Mr. Darwin's Critics" in *Darwiniana* (New York, 1898), 184.

[7]*Life and Letters,* II, 419.

[8]From "Illustrations of Mr. Gladstone's Controversial Methods," in *Science and the Christian Tradition* (New York, 1898), 413-14.

[9]*Method and Results,* 3.

[10]From "Science and Morals," in *Evolution and Ethics* (New York, 1898), 128. When G. K. Chesterton quoted the remark in *The Victorian Age in Literature* (New York and London, 1913), 39, he continued, "which is itself about as well-plastered a piece of rhetoric as Ruskin himself could have managed." Needless to say, Chesterton is an exception to the critical tradition I have been describing. The only other scholar I know who has recognized the power and extent of Huxley's rhetoric is Wilfred Ward in his valuable essay on Huxley in *Problems and Persons* (London, 1903), 233, 241, and 244.

[11]This influence is revealed by the fact that Aldous Huxley, on pp. 13-14 of his lecture, quotes the comments on Gladstone and Balfour to support the conclusion that Huxley, by contrast, relied on "forceful clarity to convince his readers."

> . . . if the noble first President of the Royal Society could revisit the upper air . . . he would find himself in the midst of a material civilisation more different from that of his day, than that of the seventeenth was from that of the first century. And . . . he would need no long reflection to discover that all these great ships, these railways, these telegraphs, these factories, these printing-presses, without which the whole fabric of modern English society would collapse into a mass of stagnant and starving pauperism,—that all these pillars of our State are but the ripples and the bubbles upon the surface of that great spiritual stream. . . .[12]

When the effect of losing its inventions is made to show the value of applied science, the loss is nothing less than the collapse of the whole fabric of society, and into a state, no, a mass, of stagnant and starving pauperism—though we are tempted to ask, with the eighteenth century in mind, if that would, in fact, be the permanent condition of an England without railroads and telegraphs. Then the hyperboles are doubled, in reverse. These great inventions, which are the very pillars of our State, are nothing but ripples and bubbles on the great spiritual stream of science. Two particular words show the broad character of this rhetoric. "Stagnant" pauperism is hardly a precise epithet, but the "st" alliteration resounds with emphasis in "starving," and presently, though we are not conscious of it, the contrast of "stagnant" life without science and the great "stream" of science carries its effective influence. Second, although the primary meaning of "spiritual" is "incorporeal," "mental," "pertaining to moral and intellectual life," can we—should we—suppress the overtones of "holy" and "pure"? Or even the reassuring sense that somehow science is spiritual, as is religion? Certainly it would not be out of character for Huxley to claim for science a term commonly used by his clerical adversaries in scorn of science, to describe areas far beyond its low material sphere. Turning the flank of the enemy by appropriating religious, biblical, or doctrinal phraseology, is a minor, but very effective, element in his rhetoric. We shall meet it again later on.

This passage, however, is not up to Huxley's standard: the loose development of metaphor ("pillars" becoming "ripples") and the hackneyed "noble" and "great" are unworthy of his talents. We can study a superior example a few pages below, where Part I of the essay comes to a triumphant climax, in the Macaulay manner on the Macaulay theme of progress:

> It is very certain that for every victim slain by the plague, hundreds of mankind exist and find a fair share of happiness in the world by the aid of the spinning jenny. And the great fire, at its worst, could not have burned the supply of coal, the daily working of which, in the bowels of the earth, made possible by the steam pump, gives rise to an amount of wealth to which the millions lost in old London are but as an old song.[13]

This, of course, brings down the house. But Huxley's thesis is, "that the improvement of natural knowledge . . . has not only conferred practical

[12] *Method and Results,* 25. [13] p. 29. The passage I am discussing is on pp. 29-31.

benefits on men [discussed in Part I], but, in so doing, has effected a revolution in their conceptions of the universe and of themselves, and has profoundly altered their modes of thinking and their views of right and wrong" (now to be discussed in Part II).[14] This latter discussion, however, does not commence until four initial paragraphs have been devoted to the important job of reorienting the reader's whole state of mind. Not only must he now be made to feel that the material values of science are, after all, inferior to its philosophical values; he must, if possible, even be made to feel repelled by the very worship of progress in which he has just been indulging. In short, he must be swung right-about-face, so that when Huxley comes to listing the higher values of science, the reader will accept them at once and without hesitation. This process begins in the opening sentence—and dramatically, indeed melodramatically. The fantastic praise of spinning jennies and steam pumps is still ringing in our ears as Huxley suddenly turns round and says:

> But spinning jenny and steam pump are, after all, but toys, possessing an accidental value; and natural knowledge creates multitudes of more subtle contrivances, the praises of which do not happen to be sung because they are not directly convertible into instruments for creating wealth. When I contemplate natural knowledge squandering such gifts among men. . . .

At this point we are not merely aware that scientific inventions are trivial, but we even feel a little ashamed of caring for such things, mere toys (and we, supposedly, adults), and instruments for creating wealth. The last word now carries a connotation of covetousness and waste which was quite lacking a moment ago, but is now elicited by the notion of science squandering such gifts among men. Already, therefore, we are backing away from the very object which we had just been ardently approaching.

Then Huxley introduces his thesis with a brilliant simile:

> When I contemplate natural knowledge squandering such gifts among men, the only appropriate comparison I can find for her is, to liken her to such a peasant woman as one sees in the Alps, striding ever upward, heavily burdened, and with mind bent only on her home; but yet without effort and without thought, knitting for her children. Now stockings are good and comfortable things, and the children will undoubtedly be much the better for them; but surely it would be shortsighted, to say the least of it, to depreciate this toiling mother as a mere stocking-machine—a mere provider of physical comforts?

This simile not only gives form to Huxley's abstract idea of the relative values of science, "spiritual" and material, but, more important, it makes full use of all the latent attractions of the image. There is the elemental appeal of presenting science in terms of mother, home, and children. There is the added advantage of making the mother a peasant, with its affective associations of sturdy endurance and existence close to the soil, far from the artificial life of wealth just referred to. Finally, the mother is not merely a peasant, but an Alpine peasant, and at this particular moment climbing

[14] p. 31.

to her mountain home, so that she can be presented as striding ever upward, and, though heavily burdened with household supplies, uncomplaining, her mind unselfishly bent on her home. In this way Huxley can identify science and the scientist with all the heroic qualities, inherent in the imagery, of struggle and courage, unselfish devotion to humanity, and striving upward towards the Ideal. After which, the notion of mother science as a mere stocking-machine is, of course, indignantly repudiated, and the reader is well prepared to hail her influence upon the minds and morals of her children. We may note, in passing, how effectively Huxley withholds the epithet "toiling" until the end of the paragraph. Since it cannot apply to the knitting, which is "without effort," it must and does apply to the striding upward towards home. The heroic suggestions are therefore recalled in the final sentence.

With his idea and its imagery sketched out, Huxley proceeds to expand the implications, and intensify the emotional pattern of repulsion and attraction:

> However, there are blind leaders of the blind, and not a few of them, who take this view of natural knowledge, and can see nothing in the bountiful mother of humanity but a sort of comfort-grinding machine. According to them, the improvement of natural knowledge always has been, and always must be, synonymous with no more than the improvement of the material resources and the increase of the gratifications of men.
>
> Natural knowledge is, in their eyes, no real mother of mankind, bringing them up with kindness, and, if need be, with sternness, in the way they should go, and instructing them in all things needful for their welfare. . . .

The rhetorical development is striking. The peasant mother shades easily into the bountiful mother of humanity (the remote suggestion of "mother earth" is active here); and she in turn becomes, almost without our being aware of it, so neatly is the exaggeration made under guise of mere repetition, the *real* mother of mankind, bringing up her children in *the* way they should go, and instructing them in *all* things needful for their welfare. Were religion and moral philosophy ever more cunningly disposed of?

In the meanwhile, the lower values of applied science, which were "placed" by the knitting-machine, are again attacked on the lines initiated by the opening sentence on toys and instruments of wealth, only now with more irritation because Huxley shifts his attention, and ours, from technology itself to the men who see no other values in science. These blind leaders of the blind (good oratorical stock-in-trade) cannot recognize the bountiful mother, the real mother, and so on. They can only see, at first, a comfort-grinding machine (the connotations of sensual gratification and luxury show that this is not a synonym for knitting-machine), and then suddenly they do see a mother—of a strikingly different kind:

> Natural knowledge is, in their eyes, no real mother of mankind . . . but a sort of fairy godmother, ready to furnish her pets with shoes of swiftness, swords of sharpness, and omnipotent Aladdin's lamps, so that they may have

telegraphs to Saturn, and see the other side of the moon, and thank God they are better than their benighted ancestors.

This, of course, builds on the implications we found in the opening sentence of Part II. The toys, which at first were only trifles, are now toys indeed, the toys of the rich, who look to science for the same "luxury" emotions of wonder and power which children find in magic sets and wooden soldiers; with the further appeal of enjoying the fine sense of superiority which they can assume toward their benighted ancestors.

Thus, as we finish the third paragraph, we are far from thinking that the technological values of science are merely inferior to its philosophical values. The former have been belittled and debased until, at this point, we feel that no self-respecting, intelligent person (like me) would think of giving more than a moment's thought to material progress. And consequently, since science is valuable, it must be for higher things—things as high and precious as those we have all received from our mothers. Then, in the next remark, comes the pay-off:

> If this talk were true, I, for one, should not greatly care to toil in the service of natural knowledge.

The tone of righteous superiority is, we feel, entirely justified, very much to Huxley's credit (we'd feel the same way if we were scientists). And by the astute repetition of the word "toil," Huxley beautifully identifies himself with the heroic mother of humanity striding ever upward. Who would not listen with confidence and admiration to such a man?

In its way this is certainly a brilliant piece of rhetorical writing; and yet the truth is that it will not bear scrutiny. The passage is blurred and confused, because Huxley is saying two things at once: first, that the material values of applied science are inferior, though none the less genuine (the children will be much the better for the stockings), to the moral and intellectual values of pure science; second, that scientific inventions are mere toys which people prize for what they can get out of them—money, or physical luxuries, or the thrill of "Popular Mechanics," or the mean complacency of feeling superior to their ancestors. And this second estimate is in striking contradiction not only to the first, but to the whole essay up to this point.

The fact is that Huxley shared the optimistic pride of the Victorians in the vast commercial and industrial progress of England, and he was ready enough to salute the great middle class which directed it.[15] But at the same time, he was very much irritated both by middle-class ambitions to grow rich and buy a peerage,[16] and by middle-class suspicion of science as "speculative rubbish"—at the worst, on grounds that "rule of thumb" had been the source of past prosperity and would suffice "for the future welfare of the arts and manufactures"; at the best, because "scientific

[15]See, for example, "The Progress of Science," in *Method and Results,* 42; "A Liberal Education; and Where to Find It," in *Science and Education,* 94.

[16]See "Administrative Nihilism," in *Method and Results,* 252-3.

knowledge of direct practical use" is alone valuable, and "can be studied apart from another sort of scientific knowledge, which is of no practical utility, and which is termed 'pure science.' "[17] Both of Huxley's attitudes, enthusiasm for industrial progress and scorn for the crass ambitions and intellectual blindness of "practical men," are exactly what we might expect from a popular champion of science, himself of the middle class, but a scientist who happened to be well over on the theoretical side. This explains what happened at the turning-point of the essay. As Huxley's mind shifted from the praise of applied science, sincerely given, to the greater glories of pure science, he thought of those stupid business men making large fortunes out of the former, and going about disparaging the latter. And with characteristic pugnacity he tore after them, only to strike, in his irritation, at the whole world of applied science, and talk as though steam pumps and spinning jennies were for every one no better than comfort-grinding machines or telegraphs to Saturn. In short, the rhetoric is not under control, or, to put it differently, it is not being used simply to sway the reader and make him feel the inferior status of technology; rather it serves mainly to release Huxley's personal annoyance, and thereby accidentally and inconsistently to rouse the reader's disgust with applied science in general.

What has happened here is fairly common in Victorian writing. The rhetoric tends to get out of hand because the writer is suddenly swept by a gust of personal emotion which he cannot check or cannot master sufficiently to integrate it with his theme. The difficulty stems from an inability to stand far enough off, with enough detachment to contemplate different and perhaps mutually exclusive elements in a given situation at one and the same time. Arnold observed "our want of flexibility . . . our inaptitude for seeing more than one side of a thing . . . our intense energetic absorption in the particular pursuit we happen to be following";[18] or, one might add, in a new idea that crosses our path. Why this was so is too large a question to pursue in this paper. But whatever its ultimate cause, the Victorian sensibility has a tendency to jump from point to point, one might say from passion to passion, with the result that two attitudes which are not compatible, or at any rate not co-ordinated, are sometimes expressed at the same time.

In the passage we have just examined, the shift of focus from principles to persons is characteristic, especially where Huxley is on the attack. He knew that because our antipathies are much more readily aroused by men than by doctrines, he could strike more effectively at a creed by exposing its disciples than by attacking it directly. This can be illustrated by two passages on the same subject, the bibliolatry which appealed to plenary inspiration against the unbiblical truths of the new science. The first deals with the topic ideologically, and by doing so comes close to what we should expect from the Huxleyan tradition of sincerity and clarity:

[17]From "Science and Culture," in *Science and Education,* 137 and 155.
[18]From "Sweetness and Light," in *Culture and Anarchy* (New York, 1901), 13.

Wherever bibliolatry has prevailed, bigotry and cruelty have accompanied it. It lies at the root of the deep-seated, sometimes disguised, but never absent, antagonism of all the varieties of ecclesiasticism to the freedom of thought and to the spirit of scientific investigation. For those who look upon ignorance as one of the chief sources of evil; and hold veracity, not merely in act, but in thought, to be the one condition of true progress, whether moral or intellectual, it is clear that the biblical idol must go the way of all other idols. Of infallibility, in all shapes, lay or clerical, it is needful to iterate with more than Catonic pertinacity, *Delenda est.*[19]

No one, of course, would imagine that this was unbiased writing, but we may grant that in this instance Huxley is presenting his side of the case without taking "unfair rhetorical advantages of an opponent." But that is hardly true of the second passage where he concentrates on the Bibliolaters themselves:

In this nineteenth century, as at the dawn of modern physical science, the cosmogony of the semi-barbarous Hebrew is the incubus of the philosopher and the opprobrium of the othodox. Who shall number the patient and earnest seekers after truth, from the days of Galileo until now, whose lives have been embittered and their good name blasted by the mistaken zeal of Bibliolaters? Who shall count the host of weaker men whose sense of truth has been destroyed in the effort to harmonise impossibilities—whose life has been wasted in the attempt to force the generous new wine of Science into the old bottles of Judaism, compelled by the outcry of the same strong party?[20]

Here, in comparison, our feelings are brought far more sharply into play, because Huxley has shifted his focus from opposing principles to contending parties, and presented the parties in black-and-white antithesis. Our sense of justice, with the complementary emotions of pity for the wronged and anger for the perpetrators, is finely, and extravagantly, outraged. The lives of men (good men, too, patient and earnest seekers after truth) were *embittered* and *wasted,* their good names *blasted,* their sense of truth *destroyed.* And not a few men either: they were beyond number, beyond count, and all of them, it is implied, men like Galileo. The one, and only, example could hardly be better chosen, with its nice suggestion of the Inquisition.

Before leaving this passage, one minor technicality is worth noticing for its evidence of how closely Huxley studied his effects. The explosive disgust of the alliterative "b," announced when the semi-barbarous Hebrew accepts what is the incubus of the philosopher and the opprobrium of the orthodox, and then intensified when lives are embittered and good names blasted by Bibliolaters, is still active when we reach the old bottles of Judaism.

II

In the examples so far considered, Huxley's method may be loosely described as exaggeration or hyperbole. In those that follow we can study

[19]From the Preface to *Science and the Hebrew Tradition* (New York, 1898), ix-x.
[20]From "The Origin of Species," in *Darwiniana,* 52.

a more subtle technique, that of insinuation. This is intimately related to his agnosticism.

In considering Huxley's "evil" influence upon religious vitality, Wilfred Ward once suggested that it should be charged not so much to what he said as to the way he said it. His agnosticism made him willing, officially, to admit that theism, in one form or another, was a possibility, and certainly to reject dogmatic atheism, but "his anti-Christian rhetoric was calculated . . . to destroy religious belief wholesale, including positions which the writer himself, to say the least, considered quite tenable."[21] But considered tenable in what sense? In the sense, I think, that he thought them safe from logical attack, but not in the sense that he himself really thought them credible. We have to remember that Huxley was not a genuine agnostic, but only a polemical agnostic. The genuine agnostic is really in doubt: he is searching for a religious truth which he considers entirely possible. But the polemical agnostic is an atheist, or at any rate a naturalist, at heart. He has no doubts. He does not believe, as Huxley confessed for himself, that there is "any justification for cutting the Universe into two halves, one natural and one supernatural."[22] He has no faith in immortality, and none in either a personal God or a divine spirit immanent in the universe. But to deny the possibility of such things would be naïve. They had best be treated agnostically, which will mean admitting that their truth is tenable, but at the same time betraying one's real denial of them, both consciously and unconsciously, through one's language. I think that Ward took Huxley's admissions too seriously because he did not distinguish between polemical and genuine agnosticism;[23] but he was dead right about the anti-religious rhetoric.

The essay "On Improving Natural Knowledge," which is so rich in rhetorical play, ends with a passage on the foundation of the new morality which is being laid down by science:

> And as regards the second point—the extent to which the improvement of natural knowledge has remodelled and altered what may be termed the intellectual ethics of man,—what are among the moral convictions most fondly held by barbarous and semi-barbarous people?
>
> They are the convictions that authority is the soundest basis of belief; that merit attaches to a readiness to believe; that the doubting disposition is a bad one, and scepticism a sin; that when good authority has pronounced what is to be believed, and faith has accepted it, reason has no further duty. There are many excellent persons who yet hold by these principles, and it is not my present business, or intention, to discuss their views.[24]

In the last sentence the polite irony of "excellent," which means "stupid if respectable," is followed by one of Huxley's typical refusals to take issue

[21] *Problems and Persons,* 241.

[22] In the Prologue to *Essays on Some Controverted Questions,* reprinted in *Science and the Christian Tradition,* 39 n.

[23] Cf. a similar distinction made by E. B. Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflections of a Mid and Late Victorian* (New York, 1920), 189-95, where he discusses the meaning of the term "agnostic" as used in Huxley's period.

[24] *Method and Results,* 39-40. The entire passage I am discussing is on pp. 39-41.

with principles which, it is implied, he could of course demolish if he wanted to—and which, in point of fact, he always proceeds at once to do, if he has not done so already.[25] But the apparent refusal is well calculated to put the reader off his guard. If by any chance he finds himself judging and condemning, he must be doing so on his own account: he is not being influenced or prejudiced—how could he be?—by a man who is not discussing the matter. A second glance would show, of course, that Huxley has already judged and condemned these principles by associating their "excellent" upholders with barbarous and semi-barbarous people; but our reading habits, especially of prose, are far too rapid to make such a second glance a possibility that Huxley need consider. "All I wish to bring clearly before your minds," he continues blandly, as though off in another direction, "is the unquestionable fact. . . ." But before we let Huxley state this "fact," let us consider the sentence which he *would* have written had he really been dropping the authoritarian beliefs of these excellent persons:

> All I wish to bring clearly before your minds is the unquestionable fact, that the improvement of natural knowledge is effected by methods which follow just the opposite convictions, and assume the exact reverse of each.

That, I suppose, is an unquestionable fact. Huxley would there be talking only of science. He would not be saying or implying that these authoritarian principles might not be quite right and proper in other areas of thought, in religion, for instance. Certainly, many really excellent persons, John Henry Newman for one example, believed that the authority of divine revelation, preserved in the creeds or in the Bible, was the soundest basis of belief. But not Huxley—as we see from the sentence which he *did* write:

> All I wish to bring clearly before your minds is the unquestionable fact, that the improvement of natural knowledge is effected by methods which directly give the lie to all these convictions, and assume the exact reverse of each to be true.

This, of course, is quite different—not, perhaps, in what Huxley could claim he was saying, but certainly in what he is implying. The clauses could be interpreted as meaning that scientific methods "give the lie to these convictions in the field of natural knowledge, and assume the exact reverse of each to be true for scientific purposes." But at this point, with the reader conditioned as he is, they can only mean "give the lie to these convictions and prove them to be false," period. With our critical intelligence neutralized, and our knowledge that these are the convictions of barbarous and semi-barbarous people, we are helpless. We can only say, no wonder modern science gives them the lie.

Then, in the next paragraph Huxley adds insult to injury. In describing the method of science he largely follows a negative formula: it is not this,

[25]See, for example, *Method and Results,* 39, lines 6-9 from the bottom, and cf. the previous paragraph; *Science and Education,* 394; *Science and the Hebrew Tradition,* 288.

it does not assume that, and so forth, but in each case the negative idea is expressed in authoritarian and religious terms. In this way he seems to be setting up a contrast between science and religion; and since what he claims for science is obviously true, religion is made to seem obviously false.

> The improver of natural knowledge absolutely refuses to acknowledge authority, as such. For him, scepticism is the highest of duties; blind faith the one unpardonable sin. And it cannot be otherwise, for every great advance in natural knowledge has involved the absolute rejection of authority, the cherishing of the keenest scepticism, the annihilation of the spirit of blind faith; and the most ardent votary of science holds his firmest convictions, not because the men he most venerates hold them; not because their verity is testified by portents and wonders; but because his experience teaches him that whenever he chooses to bring these convictions into contact with their primary source, Nature—whenever he thinks fit to test them by appealing to experiment and to observation—Nature will confirm them. The man of science has learned to believe in justification, not by faith, but by verification.

The final epigram is masterful, and crystallizes the method. All that Huxley *says,* of course, is that the scientist must not rest upon faith, but must verify his hypotheses by observation and experiment. But because of the theological diction, and the emotional bias he has already set up in the reader from the previous paragraph, he can insinuate that whoever believes any longer in justification by faith is just a bit of a fool, to put it mildly. One must hear the sarcastic tone in the phrase "not by faith," followed by the triumphant "but by verification."

The fact is that there is not one argument in the whole passage which has any logical bearing on religious authoritarianism or religious faith or religious people; and yet we find ourselves at the end looking at all three with the gravest suspicion. To appreciate how devastating this rhetoric is, we have only to compare a passage by G. H. Lewes on the same subject:

> The Faith of Theology and the Faith of Science are very different in their credentials. The former is reliance on the truth of principles handed down by Tradition, of which no verification is possible, no examination permissible; the latter is reliance on the truth of principles which have been sought and found by competent inquirers, tested incessantly by successive generations, are always open to verification in all their details, and always modifiable according to fresh experiences.[26]

We are left in no doubt about Lewes' own preference, but, beyond that, the religious attitude is not even challenged, let alone rendered contemptible.

My last example of Huxley's rhetoric is taken from the introductory paragraphs of the Prologue to *Essays on Some Controverted Questions.* His thesis is that the intellectual history of man has shown a constant growth in naturalism accompanied by a co-ordinate elimination of supernaturalism. He has therefore first to show that this is true, and then close his introduction with the key question, "How far is this process to go?"—that being

[26] "On the Dread and Dislike of Science" (*Fortnightly Review,* XXXIII n.s., 1878, 811).

"the Controverted Question of our time." And if that were all that he did, we would not be concerned with the passage. But how could it be, with that question coming up? To Huxley, of course, there was no doubt of the right answer: "the further the better." It was imperative, therefore, that the reader should be so conditioned by the previous paragraphs that that answer should come with the speed and thoughtlessness of a reflex the moment the crucial question was put.

The success of naturalism is first announced:

> . . . so far as men have paid attention to Nature, they have been rewarded for their pains. They have developed the Arts which have furnished the conditions of civilised existence; and the Sciences, which have been a progressive revelation of reality and have afforded the best discipline of the mind in the methods of discovering truth.[27]

Here again one is impressed by the slippery use of language. Huxley does not exactly, specifically, say that reality is what science reveals, or that truth is discoverable only by the scientific method, but both are well implied. Then, to the claim of progress, he adds the claim of agreement:

> They have accumulated a vast body of universally accepted knowledge; and the conceptions of man and of society, of morals and of law, based upon that knowledge, are every day more and more, either openly or tacitly, acknowledged to be the foundations of right action.

After this defence, Huxley can turn confidently to the record of supernaturalism:

> History also tells us that the field of the supernatural has rewarded its cultivators with a harvest, perhaps no less luxuriant, but of a different character. It has produced an almost infinite diversity of Religions. These, if we set aside the ethical concomitants upon which natural knowledge also has a claim, are composed of information about Supernature; they tell us of the attributes of supernatural beings, of their relations with Nature, and of the operations by which their interference with the ordinary course of events can be secured or averted. It does not appear, however, that supernaturalists have attained to any agreement about these matters, or that history indicates a widening of the influence of supernaturalism on practice, with the onward flow of time. On the contrary, the various religions are, to a great extent, mutually exclusive; and their adherents delight in charging each other, not merely with error, but with criminality, deserving and ensuing punishment of infinite severity.

Sleight-of-hand could hardly be more skilful. All that Huxley says, in the next to last sentence, is that supernaturalists have not agreed about these matters and that the influence of supernaturalism has declined. But what he insinuates is that this fact is a test of value, so that we find ourselves condemning supernaturalism on a basis which, were it brought into the open, we would be quick to challenge. Disagreement and decline may be regrettable matters of fact; they are scarcely proofs of the inferiority of supernaturalism to a contrary outlook that happens to have enjoyed greater

[27] *Science and the Christian Tradition,* 5-6. The complete passage I am dealing with is on pp. 5-7.

agreement and popular success. And yet, though we know that that is true, we are ready at this point to reject any philosophy which has to make such a confession, so neatly has Huxley's previous paragraph associated the great achievements of science with agreement and progress. To resist the appeal would require far more caution than we think necessary in reading Huxley, and far slower habits of reading in general than we have acquired. In any case, the final clause is so damaging that we are in no mood to give religion its due. For Huxley does not say that some religious people have charged each other with error and criminality, and that even a few, here and there, have found a sadistic delight in doing so. That would be a fair statement—but a minor blunder, given his intention of determining in advance what answer we shall make to the culminating question. What he actually says, therefore, is that "their adherents delight in charging each other" with error and criminality. That's religious people for you! Thank God, religion is declining! At which point, we are literally unable to remember the many thousands of adherents, in all ages, who have found spiritual and moral strength in a supernatural theology. Needless to say, Huxley was well aware of that historical fact. On another occasion he could admit that anyone who recalled the "ethical purity and nobility [of Christianity], which apostles have pictured, in which armies of martyrs have placed their unshakable faith" was not "likely to under-rate the importance of the Christian faith . . . in human history."[28] But that, as I say, was on another occasion. This occasion called for the suppression of any such evidence in favour of supernaturalism—which incidentally shows us that "the candour with which he acknowledged a weakness in his own case" was not, as Aldous Huxley imagined, "always complete."

He next proceeds to press home the argument that the facts of growth and decline are unquestionable standards of value:

> In singular contrast with natural knowledge, again, the acquaintance of mankind with the supernatural appears the more extensive and the more exact, and the influence of supernatural doctrines upon conduct the greater, the further back we go in time and the lower the stage of civilisation submitted to investigation. Historically, indeed, there would seem to be an inverse relation between supernatural and natural knowledge. As the latter has widened, gained in precision and in trustworthiness, so has the former shrunk, grown vague and questionable; as the one has more and more filled the sphere of action, so has the other retreated into the region of meditation, or vanished behind the screen of mere verbal recognition.

Again, Huxley seems merely to be stating a fact which no one is likely to question. The word "historically," placed conspicuously at the beginning of the middle sentence, serves to place his remarks in the neutral area of established truth. Hence the general attitude aroused is one of agreement, though what we are admitting is, of course, not simply the fact of change, but that the change has been progress. For supernaturalism is first asso-

[28]From "Agnosticism," in *Science and the Christian Tradition,* 254.

ciated with the lower stage of civilization, and is then said to have "retreated" before the advance of naturalism, where the connotation of "defeat" by the stronger (because more enlightened) power is patent. (We must remember the enormous difference the Victorian assumed between savages and Englishmen, before later research suggested another point of view, as in Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture*.) Then, his case made, Huxley blandly continues:

> Whether this difference of the fortunes of Naturalism and of Supernaturalism is an indication of the progress, or of the regress, of humanity; of a fall from, or an advance towards, the higher life; is a matter of opinion. The point to which I wish to direct attention is that the difference exists and is making itself felt.

Could anything be more bare-faced? He will not debate the matter; he is only concerned to show that a difference exists! The hesitant reader is thus reassured that Huxley is merely stating a fact and not a judgment; if the reader has made up his mind he has done so for himself. Once that is established, Huxley can add the weight of his own authority, offered with due modesty:

> Men are growing to be seriously alive to the fact that the historical evolution of humanity, which is generally, and I venture to think not unreasonably, regarded as progress, has been, and is being, accompanied by a co-ordinate elimination of the supernatural from its originally large occupation of men's thoughts. The question—How far is this process to go?—is, in my apprehension, the Controverted Question of our time.

To which question, the reader instantly answers, "The further the better." We cannot help recalling the reviewer of *The Origin of Species* in the *Quarterly* who was so justly reproved by Huxley for opening "his case by endeavouring to create a prejudice against the prisoner in the minds of the jury."

III

In thus attempting to qualify the notion of Huxley as a man of simple honesty and plain speech by showing that he was not always a lover of truth and a hater of rhetoric, but sometimes almost the reverse, I have no intention of blackening his character. To expect that any man could spend a lifetime in controversy and never use the weapons of controversy would be naïve. When Frederick Rogers spoke of a certain Dr. W. as an "unscrupulous controversialist," Newman answered: "I dare say he is. But who is not? . . . I declare I think it is as rare a thing, candour in controversy, as to be a Saint."[29] In a sense, this opinion is confirmed by the fact that the only Victorian who was genuinely candid in controversy, and whose style was completely lacking in rhetorical colouring, was the saint of rationalism, J. S. Mill. At any rate, if Huxley was no saint, neither

[29] *Letters and Correspondence of John Henry Newman*, ed. Anne Mozley (London, 1891), II, 324.

was he a sinner. His misrepresentations are not, I think, vicious or unscrupulous, and much of the time he was kept from taking "unfair rhetorical advantages," not so much by his passion for veracity as by his love of humour, since laughter dissipates the anger that can lead so easily to distortion. Moreover, no one would say, apropos of his anti-religious rhetoric, that Huxley had not some cause for irritation. He was brought up in Evangelical circles to believe in "the necessity, on pain of reprobation in this world and damnation in the next, of accepting, in the strict and literal sense, every statement contained in the Protestant Bible"; and to think of anyone who trusted for interpretation to "carnal reason" as almost belonging to the criminal classes.[30] This bigotry, as it seemed to him once he was "emancipated," was something he could never forget or forgive. And the latent bitterness it fostered was then increased a hundred fold by the frightened and ignorant outcry which too many of the clergy, led by Samuel Wilberforce, raised in the sixties against science in general, and against Darwin and Huxley in particular. Indeed, Huxley had only to read *The Origin of Species* to foresee the coming battle, and to prepare to give blow for blow. In November, 1859, he wrote to Darwin: "As to the curs which will bark and yelp, you must recollect that some of your friends, at any rate, are endowed with an amount of combativeness which . . . may stand you in good stead. I am sharpening up my claws and beak in readiness."[31] If we have more admiration for Darwin's dignified silence in the face of attack, we are far from blaming Huxley for sharpening up his rhetoric.

For this remark is an admission that he could enjoy using controversial methods rather different from "saying what I mean in the plainest of plain language." Still better, one may cite against his denials, a passage from the Prologue to *Controverted Questions:*

> If I may judge by my own taste, few literary dishes are less appetising than cold controversy; moreover, there is an air of unfairness about the presentation of only one side of a discussion, and a flavour of unkindness in the reproduction of "winged words," which, however appropriate at the time of their utterance, would find a still more appropriate place in oblivion. Yet, since I could hardly ask those who have honoured me by their polemical attentions to confer lustre on this collection, by permitting me to present their lucubrations along with my own; and since it would be a manifest wrong to them *to deprive their, by no means rare, vivacities of language of such justification as they may derive from similar freedoms on my part;* I came to the conclusion that my best course was to leave the essays just as they were written. . . .[32]

Our conclusion is, that if Huxley's style reveals a bias, a failure to recognize both sides of an issue, a play of exaggeration and insinuation calculated to impose on unwary readers and critics, this is not because he was simply

[30]From the Prologue to *Controverted Questions,* in *Science and the Christian Tradition,* 21-2.

[31]*Life and Letters,* I, 189.

[32]*Science and the Christian Tradition,* 2. The italics are mine.

a slick politician with a party platform to defend. His anti-religious rhetoric had its source in a firm belief that the term " 'Nature' covers the totality of that which is,"[83] and that the religious view of man and the universe was not only an illusion, but that in the hands of its official upholders it was an obstacle to the advancement of scientific truth. His advocacy, therefore, as Wilfred Ward has noticed, "was not special pleading to order, but the outcome of deep conviction." "But none the less," Ward adds at once, "his method was distinctly that of the able and lucid exponent of one side."[84]

[83]In the Prologue to *Controverted Questions,* in *Science and the Christian Tradition,* 39 n.

[84]*Problems and Persons,* 233.

A KEY TO THE HOUSE OF USHER

DARREL ABEL

BY common consent, the most characteristic of Poe's "arabesque" tales is "The Fall of the House of Usher." It is usually admired for its "atmosphere" and for its exquisitely artificial manipulation of Gothic claptrap and décor, but careful reading reveals admirable method in the author's use of things generally regarded by his readers as mere decorative properties.

Poe insisted that the "calculating" and "ideal" faculties, far from being "at war" with each other, were complementary aspects of the creative imagination—a doctrine vigorously reasserted by critics in our own day. He further maintained that "it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring as directly as possible from their causes." Such an emphasis on logical exactitude in the calculation of artistic effect invites inquiry into the question: How far is the unity of effect (which he called "that vital requisite of all works of Art") in one of Poe's most characteristic and successful works directly analysable into its causes? It will be seen that his effects are produced by deeper causes than has been supposed by those casual critics who believe that the horror of "The Fall of the House of Usher" is merely an adventitious product of "atmosphere."

I

Too much of the horror of the tale has usually been attributed to its setting superficially considered. But the setting does have a double importance, descriptive and symbolic. It first operates descriptively, as suggestively appropriate and picturesque background for the unfolding of events. It later operates symbolically: certain features of the setting assume an ominous animism and function; they become important active elements instead of mere static backdrop.

Descriptively the setting has two uses: to suggest a mood to the observer which makes him properly receptive to the horrible ideas which grow in his mind during the action; and to supply details which reinforce, but do not produce, those ideas.

The qualities of the setting are remoteness, decadence, horrible gloom. Remoteness (and loss of feature) is suggested by details of outline, dimension, and vista. Decadence is suggested by details of the death or decrepitude of normal human and vegetable existences and constructions, and by the growth of morbid and parasitic human and vegetable existences, as well as by the surging sentience of inorganism. Gloom and despair are suggested by sombre and listless details of colour and motion (at climactic points, lurid colour and violent action erupt with startling effect from this sombre listlessness). The narrator points out in the opening passage of the tale that the gloom which invested the domain of Usher was not sublime

and pleasurable (which would have made it an expression of "supernal beauty" in Poe's opinion), but was sinister and vaguely terrible.

Five persons figure in the tale, but the interest centres exclusively in one—Roderick Usher. The narrator is uncharacterized, undescribed, even unnamed. (I shall call him Anthropos, for convenient reference.) In fact, he is a mere point of view for the reader to occupy, but he does lend the reader some acute, though not individualizing, faculties: five keen senses which shrewdly perceive actual physical circumstances; a sixth sense of vague and indescribable realities behind the physical and apparent; a clever faculty of rational interpretation of sensible phenomena; and finally, a sceptical and matter-of-fact propensity to mistrust intuitional apprehensions and to seek natural and rational explanations. In short, he is an habitual naturalist resisting urgent convictions of the preternatural.

The doctor and valet are not realized as characters; they are less impressive than the furniture; and Anthropos sees each only once and briefly. No duties requiring the attendance of other persons are mentioned, so our attention is never for a moment diverted from Roderick Usher. His sister Madeline's place in the story can best be explained in connection with comment on Usher himself.

The action of the story is comparatively slight; the energetic symbolism, to be discussed later, accomplishes more. Anthropos arrives at the House of Usher, and is conducted into the presence of his host. Usher has invited Anthropos, a friend of his school-days, in the hope that a renewal of their association will assist him to throw off a morbid depression of spirits which has affected his health. Anthropos is shocked at the ghastly infirmity of his friend. He learns that Madeline, Roderick's twin and the only other living Usher, is near death from a mysterious malady which baffles her physicians. Presently she dies and Roderick Usher, fearing that the doctors who had been so fascinated by the pathology of the case might steal her body from the grave, places it in a sealed coffin in a subterranean vault under the House of Usher. Anthropos assists in this labour.

Immediately there is an observable increase in the nervous apprehensiveness of Roderick Usher. He finds partial relief from his agitation in the painting of horribly vague abstract pictures and in the improvisation of wild tunes to the accompaniment of his "speaking guitar." For seven or eight days his apprehensiveness increases and steadily communicates itself to Anthropos as well, so that, at the end of that time, a night arrives when Anthropos' state of vague alarm prevents his going to sleep. Usher enters and shows him through the window that, although the night is heavily clouded, the House of Usher's environs are strangely illuminated. Anthropos endeavours, not very judiciously, to calm him by reading aloud from a romance that might have come from the library of Don Quixote. At points of suspense in this romance, marked by description of loud noises, Anthropos fancies that he hears similar sounds below him in the House of Usher. Roderick Usher's manner, during this reading, is inattentive and

wildly preoccupied; at the noisy climax of the romance Usher melodramatically shrieks that the noises outside had actually been those of his sister breaking out of the coffin in which she had been sealed alive. The door bursts open; Madeline appears and, falling forward dead in her gory shroud, carries Roderick Usher likewise dead to the floor beneath her. Anthropos rushes from the House of Usher, turning in his flight to view its shattering collapse into the gloomy tarn beneath it. How these events become invested with horror can only be understood by discerning the meanings which the symbolism of the tale conveys into them.

II

Roderick Usher is himself a symbol—of isolation, and of a concentration of vitality so introverted that it utterly destroys itself. He is physically isolated. Anthropos reaches the House of Usher after a whole's day's journey "through a singularly dreary tract of country" that is recognizably the same sort of domain-beyond-reality as that traversed by Childe Roland and his medieval prototypes. Arrived at the mansion, he is conducted to Usher's "studio" "through many dark and intricate passages." And there "the eye struggled in vain to reach the remoter angles of the chamber" in which his host received him.

Usher is psychologically isolated. Although he has invited his former "boon companion" to visit and support him in this moral crisis, clearly there has never been any conviviality in his nature. "His reserve had always been habitual and excessive," and he has now evidently become more singular, preoccupied, and aloof than before. "For many years, he had never ventured forth" from the gloomy House of Usher, wherein "he was enchained by certain superstitious impressions." ("Superstitious" is the sceptical judgment of Anthropos.) Thus, although his seclusion had probably once been voluntary, it is now inescapable. His sister Madeline does not relieve his isolation; paradoxically, she intensifies it, for they are twins whose "striking similitude" and "sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature" eliminate that margin of difference which is necessary to social relationship between persons. They are not two persons, but one consciousness in two bodies, each mirroring the other, intensifying the introversion of the family character. Further, no collateral branches of the family survive; all the life of the Ushers is flickering to extinction in these feeble representatives. Therefore no wonder that Anthropos cannot connect his host's appearance "with any idea of a simple humanity."

The isolation and concentration of the vitalities of the Ushers had brought about the decay of the line. Formerly the family energies had found magnificently varied expression: "His very ancient family had been noted, time out of mind, for a peculiar sensibility of temperament; displaying itself, through long ages, in many works of exalted art, and manifested, of late, in repeated deeds of munificent yet unobtrusive charity, as well as in a passionate devotion to the intricacies, perhaps even more than to the

orthodox and easily recognizable beauties, of musical science." For all the splendid flowering of this "peculiar sensibility," its devotion to intricacies was a fatal weakness; in tending inward to more hidden channels of expression, the family sensibility had become in its current representative morbidity introverted from lack of proper object and exercise, and its only flowers were flowers of evil. It was fretting Roderick Usher to death: "He suffered much from a morbid acuteness of the senses; the most insipid food was alone endurable; he could wear only garments of a certain texture; the odors of all flowers were oppressive; his eyes were tortured by even a faint light; and there were but peculiar sounds, and these from stringed instruments, which did not inspire him with horror." These specifications detail the hyper-acuity but progressive desuetude of his five senses. The sum of things which these five senses convey to a man is the sum of physical life; the relinquishment of their use is the relinquishment of life itself. The hyper-acuity of Roderick's Usher's senses was caused by the introverted concentration of the family energies; the inhibition of his senses was caused by the physical and psychological isolation of Usher. It is noteworthy that the only willing use he makes of his senses is a morbid one—not to sustain and positively experience life, but to project his "distempered ideality" on canvas and in music. This morbid use of faculties which ought to sustain and express life shows that, as Life progressively loses its hold on Roderick Usher, Death as steadily asserts its empery over him. The central action and symbolism of the tale dramatize this contest between Life and Death for the possession of Roderick Usher.

III

Some of the non-human symbols of the tale are, as has been mentioned, features of the physical setting which detach themselves from the merely picturesque ensemble of background particulars and assume symbolical meaning as the tale unfolds. They have what might be called an historical function; they symbolize what has been and is. The remaining symbols are created by the "distempered ideality" of Roderick Usher as the narrative progresses. These have prophetic significance; they symbolize what is becoming and what will be. The symbols which Usher creates, however, flow from the same dark source as the evil in symbols which exist independently of Usher: that evil is merely channelled through his artistic sensibility to find bold new expression.

All the symbols express the opposition of Life-Reason to Death-Madness. Most of them are mixed manifestations of those two existences; more precisely, they show ascendant evil encroaching upon decadent good. On the Life-Reason side are ranged the heavenly, natural, organic, harmonious, featured, active qualities of things. Against them are ranged the subterranean, subnatural, inorganic, inharmonious, vague or featureless, passive qualities of things. Although most of the symbols show the encroachment of Death-Madness on Life-Reason, two symbols show absolute evil trium-

phant, with no commixture of good even in decay. One of these is the tarn, a physically permanent feature of the setting; the other is Roderick Usher's ghastly abstract painting, an impromptu expression of the evil which has mastered his sensibility. There are no symbols of absolute good.

The House of Usher is the most conspicuous symbol in the tale. It displays all the qualities (listed above) of Life-Reason, corrupted and threatened by Death-Madness. It stands under the clouded heavens, but it is significantly related to the subterranean by the zigzag crack which extends from its roof (the most heavenward part of the house) to the tarn. The trees about it connect it with nature, but they are all dead, blasted by the preternatural evil of the place; the only living vegetation consists of "rank sedges" (no doubt nourished by the tarn), and fungi growing from the roof, the most heavenward part. The house is also a symbol of the organic and harmonious because it expresses human thought and design, but the structure is crazy, threatened not only by the ominous, zigzag, scarcely discernible fissure, but also by the perilous decrepitude of its constituent materials, which maintained their coherency in a way that looked almost miraculous to Anthropos: "No portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones." In the interior of the house, the furnishings seemed no longer to express the ordered living of human creatures: "The general furniture was profuse, comfortless, antique, and tattered. Many books and musical instruments lay scattered about, but failed to give any vitality to the scene." That is, the human life it expressed was not ordered and full, but scattered and tattered. The "eyelike windows," the most conspicuous feature of the house, looked vacant from without, and from within were seen to be "altogether inaccessible"; they admitted only "feeble gleams of encrimsoned light." Life and motion within the house were nearly extinct. "An air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all."

Roderick Usher resembles his house. It is unnecessary to point out the ways in which a human being is normally an expression of Life-Reason—of heavenly, natural, organic, harmonious, featured, and active qualities. The Death-Madness opposites to these qualities are manifested in interesting correspondences between the physical appearance of Usher and that of his house. The zigzag crack in the house, and the "inconsistency" between its decayed materials and intact structure, are like the difficultly maintained composure of Usher. Anthropos declares: "In the manner of my friend I was at once struck with an incoherence—an *inconsistency* [my italics]; and I soon found this to arise from a series of feeble and futile struggles to overcome an habitual trepidancy—an excessive nervous agitation." The "minute fungi . . . hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves" of the house have their curious counterpart, as a symbol of morbid vitality, in the hair of Usher, "of a more than web-like softness and tenuity . . . [which, as it] had been suffered to grow all unheeded, . . . floated

rather than fell about the face, [so that] I could not, even with an effort, connect its Arabesque expression with any idea of simple humanity." (We are reminded of the hair reputed to grow so luxuriantly out of the heads of inhumed corpses.) Usher's organic existence and sanity seem threatened: his "cadaverousness of complexion" is conspicuous; and he not only attributes sentience to vegetable things, but also to "the kingdom of inorganization" which he evidently feels to be assuming domination over him. His most conspicuous feature was "an eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison"; after Madeline Usher's death, Anthropos observes that "the luminousness of his eye had utterly gone out." It was thus assimilated to the "vacant eyelike windows" of his house. And the active qualities of Usher were also fading. We have noticed that his malady was a combined hyper-acuity and inhibition of function of the five senses which maintain life and mind. Altogether, the fabric of Usher, like that of his house, exhibited a "specious totality."

The only other important mixed symbol is Usher's song of the "Haunted Palace." It is largely a contrast of before and after. Before the palace was assailed by "evil things, in robes of sorrow," it had "reared its head" grandly under the heavens:

> Never seraph spread a pinion
> Over fabric half so fair!

It displayed several of the characteristics of Life-Reason. But after the assault of "evil things," the Death-Madness qualities are triumphant. Order is destroyed; instead of

> Spirits moving musically
> To a lute's well-tuned law,

within the palace are to be seen

> Vast forms that move fantastically
> To a discordant melody.

Instead of a "troop of Echoes" flowing and sparkling through the "fair palace door," "a hideous throng rush out for ever" through the "pale door" "like a rapid ghastly river." Reason has toppled from its throne, and this song intimated to Anthropos "a full consciousness on the part of Usher of the tottering of his lofty reason upon her throne." The perceptible fading of bright features in the palace is like the fading of the features and vitality of both Usher and his house.

The principal symbols of decrepit Life-Reason having been explicated, it remains to comment on the two symbols of ascendant Death-Madness—the tarn, and Roderick Usher's madly abstract painting. These show the same qualities that we have seen evilly encroaching upon the Life-Reason symbols, but these qualities are here unmitigated by any hint or reminiscence of Life-Reason. The juxtaposition of the tarn-house symbols is crucial; the zigzag fissure in the house is an index to the source of the evil

which eventually overwhelms the Ushers. The tarn is an outlet of a subterranean realm; on the surface of the earth this realm disputes dominion with the powers of heaven and wins. This subnatural realm manifests itself in the miasma that rises from the tarn. "About the mansion and the whole domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate vicinity—an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven, but which had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the gray wall, and the silent tarn—a pestilent and mystic vapor, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued." This upward-reeking effluvium has its counterpart in the "distempered ideality" of Usher while he is producing his mad compositions after the death of Madeline: they are products of "a mind from which darkness, as if an inherent positive quality, poured forth upon all objects of the moral and physical universe in one unceasing radiation of gloom."

"Radiation of gloom" is as interesting an idea as "darkness visible." It reminds us that another mark of this emanation of evil was lurid illumination. The feeble gleams of light that entered Usher's studio were encrimsoned. The "luminous windows" of the "radiant palace" became the "red-litten windows" of the "haunted palace." Oddly, even Usher's mad music is described in a visual figure as having a "sulphureous lustre." On the catastrophic last night of the House of Usher, the environs are at first illuminated, not by any celestial luminaries, but by the "unnatural light of a faintly luminous and distinctly visible gaseous [so our matter-of-fact Anthropos] exhalation which hung about and enshrouded the mansion." And finally, the collapse of the house is melodramatically spotlighted by "the full, setting, and blood-red moon, which now shone vividly through that once barely perceptible fissure."

Roderick Usher's dread of the "kingdom of inorganization" as a really sentient order of existence reminds us of the animate inanimation of the tarn. Activity and harmony are really related qualities; harmony is an agreeable coincidence of motions. The tarn's absolute stillness is the negation of these qualities. Water is a universal and immemorial symbol of life; this dead water is thus a symbol of Death-in-Life. It lies "unruffled" from the first, and when at last the House of Usher topples thunderously into it, to the noisy accompaniment of Nature in tumult, its waters close "sullenly and silently over the fragments." This horrid inactivity is the condition toward which Usher is tending when he finds the exercise of his senses intolerable.

The tarn is as featureless as any visible thing can be; its blackness, "unruffled lustre," and silence are like the painted "vaguenesses" at which Anthropos shuddered "the more thrillingly" because he shuddered "not knowing why." Here are blank horrors, with only enough suggestion of feature to set the imagination fearfully to work.

This leads us to the only remaining symbol of importance, Usher's terrible painting. It is more horrible than the "Haunted Palace" because,

whereas the song described the lost but regretted state of lovely Life and Reason, the painting depicts Death-Madness horribly regnant, with no reminiscence of Life and Reason. The scene pictured is subterranean (Madeline's coffin was deposited in a suggestively similar vault): "Certain accessory points of the design served well to convey the idea that this excavation lay at an exceeding depth below the surface of the earth." It is preternaturally lurid: "No torch or other artificial source of light was discernible; yet a flood of intense rays rolled throughout, and bathed the whole in a ghastly and inappropriate splendor." The picture shows a lifeless scene without features—"smooth, white, and without interruption or device."

Before these remarks on the symbolism of the tale are concluded, some notice should be taken of the part which musical symbols play in it. Poe uses his favorite heart-lute image, from Béranger, as a motto:

> Son cœur est un luth suspendu;
> Sîtot qu'on le touche il résonne.

The "lute's well-tuned law" symbolizes ideal order in the "radiant palace," and the whole of that song is an explicit musical metaphor for derangement of intellect. For Poe, music was the highest as well as the most rational expression of the intelligence, and string music was quintessential music (wherefore Usher's jangled intellect can endure only string music). Time out of mind, music has symbolized celestial order. His conception was not far from that expressed in Dryden's "Song for St. Cecilia's Day," with "The diapason closing full in Man." The derangement of human reason, then, "sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh," cannot be better expressed than in a musical figure.

IV

I have thus tediously but by no means exhaustively exposed the filaments of symbol in "The Fall of the House of Usher" to show how much of its effect depends on the artfully inconspicuous iteration and reiteration of identical suggestions which could not operate so unobtrusively in any other way. Human actions in the story are of much less importance, but one or two events deserve notice. The depositing of Madeline's coffin in the underground vault provides Anthropos with an opportunity to compare the appearance of Roderick and Madeline Usher. She had on her face and bosom "the mockery of a faint blush" and on her lips "that suspiciously lingering smile . . . which is so terrible in death." In contrast, the "cadaverousness of complexion" of Roderick Usher had been repeatedly remarked. Thus is indicated how nearly triumphant Death is in the Ushers from the moment when Anthropos first enters the house, how scarcely perceptible is the difference between a live Usher and a dead one. Consequently, Madeline's rising up from her coffin to claim her brother for death really suggests that he had mistakenly and perversely lingered among the

living, that the similitude of life in an Usher was merely morbid animation. He needed only to cross a shadowy line to yield himself up to Madness and Death.

The night of catastrophe, then, witnessed this transition. The reading of "The Mad Trist" shows a mechanical, not a symbolical, correspondence between Usher's ruin and external things; it is the only piece of superimposed and unfunctional trumpery in the tale, though it does serve, perhaps, to explain and justify the suspenseful doubt and surprise of Anthropos when he hears the weird sounds of Madeline's ghastly up-rising. The storm which rages outside is not a supernatural storm, but a tumult of natural elements impotently opposing the silent and sullen powers which in that hour assert dominion over the House of Usher and draw it into their Plutonian depths.

The tragedy of Roderick Usher was not merely his fatal introversion, but his too-late realization of his own doom, the ineffectuality of his effort to re-establish connection with life by summoning to him the person most his friend. When at last he shrieks "Madman!" at this presumably sane friend, he crosses the borderline between sanity and madness. In a moment he dies in melodramatic circumstances, and immediately thereafter is carried into the tarn by the culminatingly symbolical collapse of his house.

V

It is expedient to review the impressions of Anthropos the determined doubter, who leaves the domain of Usher with a sense of supernatural fatality accomplished. Throughout the tale he scrupulously tries to find rational explanations for the horrors which agitate him. He explains his depression of spirits when he first views the House of Usher by reference to the gloomy combination of "very simple natural objects." That the tarn deepened this depression he accounted for psychologically: "The consciousness of the rapid increase of my superstition—for why should I not so term it?—served mainly to accelerate the increase itself." In the house he is puzzled to account for the fact that, although the furniture is all of a sort to which he has been accustomed throughout his life, it has an "unfamiliar" effect of gloom; and it is difficult for him to connect any "idea of simple humanity" with Usher's ghastly appearance, although he dutifully tries. He tells us that Usher "admitted" that his "superstitious impressions in regard to the dwelling which he tenanted" might be traced to "a more natural and far more palpable origin" than the malign sentience which he attributed to the place, that is to his grief at his sister's hopeless illness. The music which Usher composes during his bereavement is characterized by his common-sensible friend as distempered and perverted, and Usher himself is called a hypochondriac. The limited tolerance of Usher for sound is described in Anthropos' medical jargon as "a morbid condition of the auditory nerve." Usher's conviction of the sentience of the "kingdom of inorganization" is regarded by his friend as a pertinacious but not alto-

gether novel delusion. Usher's agitation is partly ascribed to the influence of the fantastic literature which he reads. The sounds which interrupt the reading of "The Mad Trist" are, Anthropos thinks (before the apparition of Madeline changes his opinion), hallucinations prompted by the wild story and his own state of excited suggestibility. The lurid, upward-streaming illumination of the environs of the House of Usher on the night of catastrophe is explained as a natural phenomenon—a "gaseous exhalation." And, if we wish, we can attribute the stupendously shattering collapse of the ancient House of Usher itself to merely physical and natural causes—the violent thrust of the storm against its frail fabric and almost dilapidated structure. But, significantly, our matter-of-fact Anthropos does not suggest any natural explanation; he merely flees "aghast."

VI

"The Fall of the House of Usher" has that "vital requisite of all works of Art, Unity." It achieves unity by a concentration and remarkably subtle co-operation of carefully calculated, complex causes. Instead of the more familiar methods of realistic narrative specification and progressive logical explication, it operates through parallel symbolic suggestions. These build up to such a climax of intensity that the final shattering crash of all these piled-up effects affords a powerful release of psychological tension.

Throughout the tale, alternative explanations, natural and supernatural, of the phenomena are set forth; and we are induced, by the consistently maintained device of a common-sense witness gradually convinced in spite of his determined scepticism, to accept imaginatively the supernatural explanation.

The tale is a consummate psychological allegory which produces its intended totality of effect by perfectly unobtrusive means; there are no seams, bastings, or other interfering reminders of its being artificially put together. It is, indeed, too successful: readers take it to be all shell, and, although it irresistibly makes its intended impression, its method is so concealed that the too casual reader may take the impression to be meretricious. Those who admire Kafka only this side idolatry for employing a method which they look upon as a brilliant innovation, will find his technique anticipated in Poe without the baffling obscurities and seeming irrelevancies of Kafka: Poe's is the art which conceals art.

TIME IN THE NOVELS OF VIRGINIA WOOLF

JOHN GRAHAM

VIRGINIA WOOLF adhered to her own critical dictum, expressed most fully in *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,* that the business of the novelist is the exploration of character. The final goal of such exploration, however, is insight into the nature of human personality, and so into the meaning of life: for Mrs. Brown, whose character is the proper subject of the novel, is really "the spirit we live by, life itself."[1] In struggling to reach that goal, Mrs. Woolf is constantly preoccupied with problems relating to time, as most critics have noted. This preoccupation underlies her concern with the phenomena of memory, change, and death, and drives her to ask several ancient difficult questions. Her efforts to answer them result in two central views of life, neither of which is the result of mere neurotic nescience.

I

In the first three novels—*The Voyage Out, Night and Day,* and *Jacob's Room*—the questions are asked in a fairly obvious way, and focus on the apparent dichotomy between two kinds of time, two worlds: on the one hand, the world of linear time, of past, present, and future, in which we are subject to unremittent and uncontrollable flux; and on the other hand, the world of mind time, an inner world of thought and imagination, in which the chaotic flow of experience derived from our life in linear time is reduced to order and unity, and in which we are therefore liberated. In all of her novels, Mrs. Woolf is troubled by the apparent dualistic conflict between these two worlds, in which the data of one frequently contradict the data of the other; but she is never willing to accept this dualism as absolute. In seeking to overcome it, two solutions are possible: either both worlds are parts of one larger reality, and are therefore integrally related to each other; or one of these worlds is unreal, and only in exploring the other shall we find a valid absolute.

In the first three novels neither of these solutions is worked out: the problem is stated, not solved. These novels are dominated by what is called in one of them "the profound and reasonless law" of linear time.[2] In this immense machine, human life is irrelevant; and against its tyranny the inner world of mind time opposes at best an escape into illusion. But in her next novel, Mrs. Woolf does offer a solution, which depends to a great extent on the relationship between Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith.

Although Clarissa exults in the "triumph and the jingle" of "life; London; this moment of June,"[3] she is also afflicted by a sense of isolation

[1] *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown* (London, 1924), 24.
[2] *The Voyage Out* (London, 1929), 322.
[3] *Mrs. Dalloway* (Modern Library, 1928), 5.

and by the recurring terror of death. The nature of her predicament is expressed most powerfully when she stands in a little room, watching the old lady in the house across the way:

> Big Ben struck the half hour.
>
> How extraordinary it was, strange, yes, touching, to see the old lady (they had been neighbours ever so many years) move away from that window, as if she were attached to that sound, that string. Gigantic as it was, it had something to do with her. Down, down, into the midst of ordinary things the finger fell making the moment solemn. She was forced, so Clarissa imagined, by that sound, to move, to go—but where? . . . Why creeds and prayers and mackintoshes? when, thought Clarissa, that's the miracle, that's the mystery; that old lady, she meant, whom she could see going from chest of drawers to dressing-table. She could still see her. And the supreme mystery which Kilman might say she had solved, or Peter might say he had solved, but Clarissa didn't believe either of them had the ghost of an idea of solving, was simply this: here was one room, there another. Did religion solve that, or love? (Pp. 192-3.)

In many of Mrs. Woolf's novels—as, for example, in *Jacob's Room*—the room symbolizes the selfhood formed in time. From her small room, then, Clarissa looks out and sees the supreme mystery: that people exist in the same stream of time, each moving under the compulsion of the time-flow (as symbolized by Big Ben), visible to each other, yet unknown to each other and essentially alone. Not even the great unifying forces of love and religion can supply any pattern relating them to each other. Clarissa tentatively theorizes about the unifying power of human personality, the "unseen part of us, which spreads wide" (p. 232), and which persists after death, relating the individual to the dead and the absent, and to all that they have known. But this nebulous hope, held uncertainly, is clarified into a positive conviction only by the life and death of Septimus Smith.

In considering Septimus, we should remember what Mrs. Woolf said in the preface: first, he was not included in the first draft of the novel; second, Clarissa was to die or commit suicide in the first draft; and third, Septimus is the "double" of Clarissa.

"It might be possible, Septimus thought, looking at England from the train window, as they left Newhaven; it might be possible that the world itself is without meaning." (P. 133.) With this thought begins his purgatorial voyage into insanity. Eventually he surrenders to his madness, seeking in no way to preserve any connection with humanity as it is directed in the ringing grooves of change by Doctors Holmes and Bradshaw. At this low point of his negative way into darkness Septimus receives his revelations. Sitting in Regent Park, he looks at the trees: "But they beckoned; leaves were alive; trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down; when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement. The sparrows fluttering, rising, and falling in jagged fountains were part of the pattern; the white and blue, barred with black branches. Sounds made harmonies with pre-

meditation; the spaces between them were as significant as the sounds. A child cried. Rightly far away a horn sounded. All taken together meant the birth of a new religion." (P. 32.)

Septimus now sees, first, that there is a unifying reality hidden in the phenomena of time which gives them pattern and significance, and second, that the pattern is eternal because there is no death. These are revelations which, if he could communicate them to mankind, would save us, for he comes as a saviour, a redeemer: "Look the unseen bade him, the voice which now communicated with him who was the greatest of mankind, Septimus, lately taken from life to death, the Lord who had come to renew society, who lay like a coverlet, a snow blanket smitten only by the sun, for ever unwasted, suffering for ever, the scapegoat, the eternal sufferer . . . ." (P. 37.) The ancient image of the sun, symbolizing the yower of divine revelation; the image of the Saviour; the emphasis upon the fact that he was lately taken from life (the life of self, the life in time) to death (the annihilation of self, the transcendence of time): all suggest that Septimus has had the vision of a cosmic unity which Clarissa, rooted as she is in the process of time, can receive only dimly and briefly. Her moment of vision, characteristically derived from her response to a human emotion, is described as "a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed" (p. 47); but the illumination is for Septimus as agonizingly blinding as the blaze of a fiercely intense sun. He is a snow blanket smitten only by the sun; or again, he is a figure, lamenting the fate of man in the desert alone, who receives full on his face the light of the dawning sun, an "astonishing revelation" (p. 106).

There is, however, a fatal and ironic flaw in the vision of Septimus: it is more than flesh can endure. His descent into the pit is naturally marked by agonized suffering; but even the saving revelations beat upon him with merciless intensity. The true terror of his vision is that it destroys him as a creature of the time-world. When he returns for a brief tranquil period to the world of actuality, it would seem that this is not so. He feels that Nature is redeemed for him by his vision; and certainly Rezia is redeemed through her love. The world is no longer without meaning, he feels: time is a garment of eternity now, a coverlet of flowers. (P. 216.)

But Septimus does not really return to sanity—the appalling sanity of Holmes and Bradshaw, our fallen selves. He has died to that sanity and cannot effect any Lazarean return. He is no longer human, and can only rise up from death to another level of being, after walking briefly in a world of flowers. Holmes and Bradshaw must crucify him: they seek dominion through the body (both are doctors), and their understanding is of the body. Therefore, when they finally return to kill him (as he believes), he cries, "I'll give it you!" and with a dreadful casualness, which makes Holmes and the fallen reader turn pale, he leaps towards the central spiritual reality, leaving for them their due legacy—a piece of dead flesh, pierced and torn.

These points must be made in order to grasp the full significance of the relationship between Septimus and Clarissa. This relationship is progressively revealed in the long scene after she hears of his death and walks alone into the little room from which, earlier in the day, she had watched the old lady across the way. There she reflects on his death:

> She had once thrown a shilling into the Serpentine, never anything more. But he had flung it away. They went on living (she would have to go back; the rooms were still crowded; people kept on coming). They (all day she had been thinking of Bourton, of Peter, of Sally), they would grow old. A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death. (Pp. 280-1.)

The meaning of Septimus' suicide is reinforced by the fact that he dies by leaping through a window. The window is used constantly as a symbol of the outlook of the self on the world around it. For the ordinary individual it is the aperture through which comes the only light he may receive; but it is also a barrier, hampering any movement of his being towards the source of that light. Clarissa makes no effort to break the pane of glass standing between herself and the sun; Septimus does: he casts off his temporal selfhood and leaps towards the centre. Clarissa realizes that in his act is an integrity which she can never have entire, rooted as she is in time: for, as we have seen, in order to penetrate to the centre, like Septimus, one must either die, or go mad, or in some other way lose one's humanity in order to exist independently of time.

Clarissa, then, accepts actuality: she even invites Bradshaw to her party. And it is Clarissa who enters the room at the end of the book and triumphs over time. Septimus cannot triumph, but his is the complete vision which gives Clarissa the power to conquer time. This we see when Clarissa again watches the old lady across the way. The question asked in a similar situation earlier in the day is now answered:

> The clock began striking. The young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him; with the clock striking the hour, one, two, three, she did not pity him, with all this going on. There! the old lady had put out her light! the whole house was dark now with this going on, she repeated, and the words came to her, Fear no more the heat of the sun. She must go back to them. But what an extraordinary night! She felt glad he had done it; thrown it away. . . . He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun. But she must go back. She must assemble. She must find Peter and Sally. And she came in from the little room. (Pp. 283-4.)

Clarissa intuitively grasps the meaning of Septimus' vision, which he could communicate only by death. She thereby absorbs into herself the significance which Septimus holds for the reader; and yet she retains her own special power to create in the imperfect fallen realm of human rela-

tions, a power which Septimus wholly lacked. In her handling of the conclusion to this novel Mrs. Woolf attempts to make clear that we must retain the limiting protecting identity which is ours in time if we are to triumph over time.

A skilful subordinate device is used throughout the book to reinforce this relationship between Septimus and Clarissa. It is the recurring tag from Shakespeare, "Fear no more the heat of the sun," in the passage quoted above. Early in the book Clarissa, looking into a shop window, sees a volume of Shakespeare opened at these lines, and as she reads them, she asks herself, "What was she trying to recover? What image of white dawn in the open country?" (P. 12.) Her failure to recover it suggests the inadequacy of her vague theories about the unifying power of personality, which I have already mentioned. Later on in the book Septimus, in his momentary tranquil return to the actuality of time, finds it transfigured. In the image which occurs to him, he had fallen through the sea of time into a flaming purgatorial world of terrifying and redeeming insight; now he returns to the surface to rejoice in the transfiguration of the world: "Every power poured its treasure on his head, and his hand lay there on the back of the sofa, as he had seen his hand lie when he was bathing, floating, on the top of the waves, while far away on shore he heard dogs barking and barking far away. Fear no more, says the heart in the body; fear no more. He was not afraid. At every moment Nature signified by some laughing hint . . . Shakespeare's words, her meaning." (Pp. 211-12.)

For Clarissa, standing in front of the shop window, this line meant an illumination lost and not yet recovered; for Septimus it means an illumination received in its fullest intensity. When Clarissa repeats this line near the end of the book, and after Septimus' death, she recalls for the reader the groping way in which she first read it; and this stresses the fact that she now repeats it as Septimus did, with a sense of peace and reassurance. So it is that the profounder vision of Septimus is given to Clarissa without its attendant agony.

When she leaves the little room, she returns to the larger room of human relations. Our knowledge of what she has just been thinking explains the sudden strange excitement of Peter Walsh as he sees her standing in the doorway of the drawing-room: for Clarissa, returning to the party, symbolizes the transfiguration of time.

II

To the Lighthouse is the full and final expression of the synthesis first attempted in *Mrs. Dalloway*. For that reason I shall limit myself to a few dogmatic remarks about the unifying and vitalizing principle of the whole book, its symbolism. Sea images, colour images, the associations of memory, recurrent verbal patterns, all serve to spin around the actual events a subtle web of interrelated meanings. The structure also is significant: the first section is called "The Window," an image associated, as we have seen,

with the individual's vision of life; the second, "Time Passes," portrays the assault of time on the integrity of that vision; and in the third, "The Lighthouse," the vision is triumphantly reaffirmed.

The lighthouse is the central symbol of the book, and what it means depends on who is looking at it: it has no single limited meaning, hence its power as a symbol. Its relation to Mrs. Ramsay is of crucial importance, for Mrs. Ramsay has the power to see what Clarissa finally saw, the transfiguration of time by eternity. But Mrs. Ramsay's vision is more sophisticated. Although she sits in her room and undergoes the mystical experience of becoming the thing she looks at, the lighthouse, she nevertheless recognizes that its meaning is paradoxical: it is "so much her, yet so little her";[4] it stands firm and unchanging amid the seas of time, yet in a sense has no reality apart from the sea. Its beam revolves in a pulsing rhythm akin to that of the time process, and so, as she watches it, she calls it "the pitiless, the remorseless" (p. 99); at the same time, however, it gives her a sense of stability, "this peace, this rest, this eternity" (p. 96). It is not change, yet cannot be separated from change, and therefore represents a vital synthesis of time and eternity. This makes it an objective correlative for Mrs. Ramsay's vision.

An objective correlative is lacking in *Mrs. Dalloway,* where Clarissa, at the end, is herself the symbol of her own vision. That explains, I think, why Mrs. Woolf could not follow her first intention of having Clarissa die: if she had, the meaning of Clarissa's vision would have vanished with Clarissa. It also explains why Mrs. Woolf can and does let Mrs. Ramsay die. It is important that she should die, for death is the most powerful assault which time can make on her vision. It sweeps her away, but it cannot destroy the lighthouse; and by the time she dies, the lighthouse has become the meaning of Mrs. Ramsay.

The relationship of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay repeats this idea on another level, for as husband and wife they are the lighthouse. Crudely put, Mrs. Ramsay equals eternity, Mr. Ramsay equals time; they are married. For Mrs. Ramsay, though she triumphs in time, triumphs because she intuits eternity; and Mr. Ramsay, though he loftily seeks a philosophical absolute which will solve the problem of "subject and object and the nature of reality" (p. 38), cannot break his bondage to time without the aid of his wife. Together they fulfil each other, and are the creators of life.

In the last section the ancient mystic symbols of the Quest and the Love Union are related to the experiences of Mr. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe. The completion of Lily's painting, her vision of life, involves a spiritual union with Mrs. Ramsay; and Mr. Ramsay's sea voyage is obviously a quest. But Lily's love union involves a quest, and Mr. Ramsay's quest culminates in a love union; for as he voyages over an expanse of sea to the lighthouse, Lily voyages over an expanse of time, searching the past for the meaning of Mrs. Ramsay. At the exact moment that Mrs. Ramsay

[4] *To the Lighthouse* (New York, 1937), 99.

appears before Lily, enabling her to complete her painting, Mr. Ramsay arrives at the lighthouse, and has rejoined his wife. The experiences of Lily and Mr. Ramsay coincide therefore not only in time but in visionary significance as well. Both reaffirm the triumphant validity of Mrs. Ramsay's vision of life.

Another set of symbols underlies this validity, performing the same function as the tag from Shakespeare in *Mrs. Dalloway*. In the first section Mrs. Ramsay goes to see if the children are asleep. They are not, for a boar's skull nailed on the wall has frightened Cam; and James, who loves its bare white severity, will not allow her to touch it. Mrs. Ramsay drapes her green shawl over the skull, thereby creating for Cam a new world of heightened beauty and peace, at the same time assuring James that the skull is still there. In the middle section the little winds of corruption enter the abandoned house and separate shawl from skull, destroying the single visionary world created from both. In the last section Cam, staring at the rush of green waters beside her, slowly recalls that world of long ago, and feels suddenly at peace. James, gazing at the severe whiteness of the lighthouse, lonely on its bare rock, recalls how the lighthouse looked when he saw it years before with his mother, and concludes that both are true—the "silvery, misty-looking tower" then, and the tower "stark and straight" now (p. 276). Thus, in the children, the synthesis achieved by Mrs. Ramsay is again vindicated.

If this analysis is right, then in these two novels Mrs. Woolf has endeavoured to work out one of the two solutions to our original problem, for the world of mind time and the world of linear time are related to each other because both are related to a central and eternal reality.

III

The Waves is significant as a radical departure from *To the Lighthouse* in technique and thought. We are once again immersed in the sea of time, and its relentless pounding again opens the abyss between mind time and linear time which *To the Lighthouse* had triumphantly closed. The book is dominated by the rhythm of waves: in the poetic passages between sections, which I shall call lyrics, the sun slowly rises and falls in the sky, lending the shape of one enormous wave to the whole book; the thoughts of the characters eddy and swirl restlessly; the style surges and subsides with brilliant intensity. The dominant mood is one of anguished effort, suffering, and disillusionment: the total vision of the book is undoubtedly tragic.

While this is the major impact of *The Waves,* I wish to discuss certain other elements which redeem it from notoriety merely as a masterpiece of negation. It is my thesis that *The Waves* is an attempt to begin a new integration of the individual, not in terms of the cosmic unity found in *To the Lighthouse,* but in terms of a "human communion." What I mean by this phrase will, I hope, shortly appear.

When the six characters are all about twenty-five years old, they hold

a farewell dinner for Percival, a seventh figure, who is leaving for India. We know Percival only through the eyes of the others, for his own consciousness is never explored; yet he is of central importance, because for the others he is a hero born to conquer the disintegrative powers of time. Like Mrs. Ramsay and Clarissa, he is the unconscious doer, the artist in living, whose medium is action.

As the dinner progresses, the others feel their common love for Percival intensify until it becomes a creative act of communion with each other. Bernard, who is a novelist and the most important of the six characters, expresses clearly the significance of this communion as they leave the restaurant and he speaks of

> . . . the swelling and splendid moment created by us from Percival;. . . . We have proved, sitting eating, sitting talking, that we can add to the treasury of moments. We are not slaves bound to suffer incessantly unrecorded petty blows on our bent back. We are not sheep either, following a master. We are creators. We too have made something that will join the innumerable congregations of past time. We too, as we put on our hats and push open the door, stride not into chaos, but into a world that our own force can subjugate and make part of the illumined and everlasting road.[5]

Now the "moment" here is very different from what it was in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse:* it no longer comes involuntarily or as a result of passive receptivity, it must be created; and it no longer consists in an intuition of a mystical cosmic reality unifying the worlds of mind and linear time. The world of the time-process "out there" is now something which man must subjugate: he is a creator. This ardent sense of their own power is evoked by their communion, in which they lose the selfhoods imposed on them by time and become, in the image used, "a whole flower, to which every eye brings its own contribution" (p. 137). Now the experience of creating this single identity lasts only a moment; but the communion created in that moment is eternal. It joins the "innumerable congregations of past time" in a celebration of the larger body of Man, which exists in an everlasting Now.

It is significant that Percival is about to leave for India, a wasteland waiting to be rescued, where the luxuriant powers of nature reign triumphantly over impotent humanity. And it is significant that as he leaves he is bade by Bernard to look at the lights of the city blending in "the yellow canopy of our tremendous energy" (p. 159), the material expression of the promethean powers of man. Percival, the protagonist of these powers, the god of action, is at the height of his glory; for in the lyric which follows his departure the sun is described as being at its zenith.

Once at its zenith, however, the sun must decline: Percival is thrown from his horse in India and is killed. Now time begins its subtle warfare of attrition against the meaning of Percival. The others forget him and go their separate ways: the "tremendous energy" which he symbolized wanes

[5] *The Waves* (London, 1931), 158.

within them, and in the world of action they feel that they have failed. Their lives have hardened into fixed patterns of behaviour, and they have lost any clear pattern of understanding. Then, when they are middle-aged, Bernard calls them together for a reunion dinner.

At this dinner the same communion is created, reaching its culmination as the six friends leave the restaurant and walk arm in arm into a park:

> "The flower," said Bernard, "the red carnation that stood in the vase on the table of the restaurant when we dined together with Percival, has become a six-sided flower; made of six lives."
>
> "A mysterious illumination," said Louis, "visible against those yew trees."
>
> "Built up with much pain, many strokes," said Jinny.
>
> "Marriage, death, travel, friendship," said Bernard; "town and country; children and all that; a many-sided substance cut out of this dark; a many-faceted flower. Let us stop for a moment; let us behold what we have made. Let it blaze against those yew trees. One life. There. It is over. Gone out." (P. 250.)

This needs little comment, in the light of the first dinner, but we might note that this single life is *cut from* the darkness of time, and burns *against* that darkness and *against* the yew trees of death.

At this dinner, however, Percival is absent; and the special promise which he symbolized has not been fulfilled. What was then the future has become the past, and as they lived it they did not conquer it. Now it is too late for action: as the sun declines it is time to seek understanding. That is why Bernard, the novelist, who seeks understanding before all things, dominates the dinner.

The new stature of Bernard is made clear in the last section of the book, where he sums up the meaning of his life. In it three notes are sounded. The first is that of constant warfare against the enemy, time. The second is the rejection of the idea that an eternal reality "out there" underlies and unifies the time-process. As a youth, Bernard recalls, he believed that the willow tree pointed to something "beyond and outside our own predicament; to that which is symbolic, and thus perhaps permanent"; now he dismisses the willow tree as one of those "phantoms made of dust . . . mutable, vain" (pp. 272, 312). There is no trace of the vision of Septimus Smith, for whom Nature's meaning was, "Fear no more the heat of the sun"; and there is no lighthouse to guide us over the waves. Against his progressive disillusionment stands only the saving reality of the human communion enjoyed at the two dinner-parties, and this is the third emphasis in his summing-up. He recalls the reunion dinner, and how "we saw for a moment laid out among us the body of the complete human being whom we have failed to be, but at the same time, cannot forget" (p. 303). As the dinner progressed, however, their temporal identities fell away, this body rose, and they became it: "I saw blaze bright Neville, Jinny, Rhoda, Louis, Susan, and myself, our life, our identity . . . we six, out of many million millions, for one moment out of what measureless abundance of past

time and time to come, burnt there triumphant. The moment was all; the moment was enough." (P. 304.) With a special awareness of their communion he leaves the restaurant in which he has been sitting and stands outside, watching the dawn rise, and facing the antagonist in the final passage of the book:

> I am aware once more of a new desire, something rising beneath me like the proud horse whose rider first spurs and then pulls him back. What enemy do we now perceive advancing against us, you whom I ride now, as we stand pawing this stretch of pavement? It is death. Death is the enemy. It is death against whom I ride with my spear couched and my hair flying back like a young man's, like Percival's, when he galloped in India. I strike spurs into my horse. Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!
>
> *The waves broke on the shore.* (P. 325.)

Bernard dies. (That is the meaning of the final sentence, which is italicized, and so belongs with the lyrics, not with Bernard's final thoughts.) As an individual he breaks on the shore. But he is much more than an individual: throughout his summing-up, he slowly sheds his private selfhood and absorbs into himself the identities of the other six. This is indicated, for example, by the way in which he applies to himself images which, throughout the book, have been associated only with the others. They are types of humanity, and Bernard thus becomes the archetype of the race as it struggles with its creative powers against the tyranny of time. That is why Bernard, the archetype of vision, finally absorbs into himself the special significance of Percival, the archetype of action; for on both levels we must ride against the enemy. The visionary struggle is stressed, however, since Percival rises again only through the effort of Bernard. It is significant that the situation here is the reverse of what it was in *Mrs. Dalloway,* where Clarissa, the artist in living, absorbed into herself the meaning of Septimus, the visionary.

Bernard thus assumes the proportions of the dragon-killer, the god who subdues chaos: he rides with "spear couched" like some St. George. He rides for the creation of the complete human being whom they have failed to be yet cannot forget, a spiritual being existing on a level untouchable by time. It is no accident that while the lyric at the beginning of the summing-up described the disappearance of the sun in darkness, Bernard at the end sees the dawn whitening the sky. While as an individual he sinks into death, he also rises as the champion of the complete human being, and becomes that being, like a dying-and-rising god.

I repeat that these remarks concern the effort which Mrs. Woolf is making to achieve a new integration of the individual. That effort is not successful in *The Waves,* which is primarily the tragedy of the individual wave breaking on the shore. Nevertheless, we find here the initial formulation of a synthesis which receives consummate expression in *Between the Acts.*

IV

The main structural device of *Between the Acts* is simple and venerable, that of a play within a play. There is the pageant staged in the garden, which I shall call the microcosmic pageant; and there is the macrocosmic pageant which goes on before and after the small pageant, and between its acts. My chief interest is in the relationship between these two pageants. The proscenium arch for both of them is a carefully fostered sense of our community in time, which frames and illuminates the present moment unfolding on the stage. All through the book a host of details sustains our feeling that the past is present.

The macrocosmic pageant unfolds for the first hundred pages and centres on the interplay of tensions between the main characters of the book. On a sleepy afternoon these tensions increase until, by the time the pageant is staged, each character is isolated from the rest. Bart Oliver, a disciple of reason, is at odds with his sister, Lucy Swithin, a disciple of faith who is addicted to an imaginative reconstruction of the past. Giles Oliver and his wife Isa embody the impulses to creative action and creative vision which we have noted in previous novels. Both are frustrated by the sequence of events. Giles, a man of action, is oppressed by time past (his life as a respectable stockbroker) and by time future (the impending war in Europe, which he can oppose with no constructive or even destructive action). His intense frustration leads him into childish infidelities to his wife, who partly symbolizes for him the oppressive sequence of events. Ironically, he stands in part for the same thing in her eyes; but she longs to escape from the burden of time into an inner world of absolute knowledge and beauty, not into a world of liberating action, and so writes poetry about her longing to "lose what binds us here."[6] They both love and hate each other; the tension between them is not resolved until the last page of the book, and even then only by implication.

The brooding and vague antagonism which settles over them all is partly broken and partly aggravated by Mrs. Manresa, a "wild child of nature" (p. 52), who surrenders eagerly to the flux of time, seeking no other absolute.

The actors and audience now arrive and the microcosmic pageant begins. There are four acts in it, and I shall consider the first three in a general way only, in order to concentrate on the last. At the start of the pageant, and through most of the acts, a chorus of villagers winds its way among the trees which form the backdrop, chanting words half-audible to the audience; for the winds of time blow away the meaning of the anonymous millions of the past. The words we do hear emphasize the tenacious endurance of the race in time; whatever period of history is passing on the stage, the chorus is always the same.

The first act is an Elizabethan tragedy. Its details need not concern us,

[6] *Between the Acts* (London, 1941), 21.

for along with all the other acts its value lies in the reactions of the audience to it. As Isa watches it she realizes that the plot, a special pattern in past time, is unimportant, and that the meaning of the play is the timeless glory and terror of love, hate, and death. But immediately after the death of one of the characters in it, the actors come forward and join in a dance. As they whirl about, laughing and shouting, the audience too begins to laugh, to clap, to join in spirit this dance of irrepressible life. It is then, as the author of the pageant, Miss La Trobe, intended, that the members of the audience *become* the Elizabethans.

After the dance an interval occurs in which tea is served in the barn. Now the macrocosmic drama is resumed. The actors do not realize that they are acting it, and for this reason the connections between the two pageants must be implied. I have space to illustrate this technique only by one example. As Lucy Swithin sits in the barn, she watches the swallows flying among the rafters and thinks how they came to this spot "before there was a channel, when the earth, upon which this Windsor chair was planted, was a riot of rhododendrons." At this point Mrs. Manresa bustles up.

> "I was hoping you'd tell me," said Mrs. Manresa. "Was it an old play? Was it a new play?"
> No one answered.
> "Look!" Lucy exclaimed.
> "The birds?" said Mrs. Manresa, looking up. (P. 130.)

The birds are the answer to her question. The play is as old as the swallows coming ages ago; and as new as the swallows swooping above them in the present moment.

The next act is cut on the pattern of Restoration comedy, and ironically modifies the grand themes of hate and love and death presented in the previous act. Now we see vanity, deceit, lust, greed, the absurdity and pathos of old age, the power and cruelty of youth. One is struck by the vigour and humour of the satire; Mrs. Woolf's hypersensitivity to the depravity of human beings is by this time less agonized and more robust. For Septimus Smith, the only terror he could not face was the depravity of men, and so he turned towards the centre. Now, however, *we* are the centre, and must face ourselves unflinchingly. Our depravity cannot be explained away; but in our attitude to it lies the measure of its power, which will be reduced to a minimum if met without illusion and with purifying laughter. No one in the book flees, as Septimus fled, to seek in death eternal life.

Yet we have eternal life, and its nature is suggested by Mrs. Swithin between the acts, when she seeks out Miss La Trobe:

> She gazed at Miss La Trobe with a cloudless old-aged stare. Their eyes met in a common effort to bring a common meaning to birth. They failed; and Mrs. Swithin, laying hold of a fraction of her meaning, said: "What a

small part I've had to play! But you've made me feel I could have played . . . Cleopatra!" . . .

"I might have been—Cleopatra," Miss La Trobe repeated. "You've stirred in me my unacted part," she meant. . . .

"You've twitched the invisible strings," was what the old lady meant; and revealed—of all people—Cleopatra! Glory possessed her. Ah, but she was not merely a twitcher of individual strings; she was one who seethes wandering bodies and floating voices in a cauldron, and makes rise up from the amorphous mass a recreated world. (Pp. 179-80.)

Miss La Trobe, the artist in vision, arouses in Lucy the slumbering power of imaginative vision which enables Lucy to see that on a level of being of which she is rarely conscious she lives all lives at all times.

In the next act of the pageant the Victorians are exuberantly parodied. The two pageants are now merging in historical focus, since many among the audience have themselves lived during the age of faith in fossils and fossil faiths, now so ruthlessly mocked. But Mrs. Swithin makes the truly significant comment when Isa asks incredulously if the Victorians were really like that:

"The Victorians," Mrs. Swithin mused. "I don't believe," she said with her odd little smile, "that there ever were such people. Only you and me and William dressed differently."

"You don't believe in history," said William. (P. 203.)

Neither does Mrs. Woolf. This pageant about history is a declaration that history itself is not leading us anywhere in particular. Yet we cannot escape it. Immediately after this act, a cloud-burst briefly showers the audience. Isa, for whom history is a burden to be lost in the attainment of some absolute, looks up: " 'O that our human pain could here have ending!' Isa murmured. Looking up she received two great blots of rain full on her face. They trickled down her cheeks as if they were her own tears. But they were all people's tears, weeping for all people." (P. 210.) This is the darker aspect of our communion, the community in bondage which we share under the tyranny of time.

With sorrow still gripping them the audience watches a tableau; a man and a woman are shown rebuilding a ruined wall. This is the task which confronts them as the inheritors in time of a civilization fallen into disrepair. As the audience watches in silence, all of the actors who have taken part in the pageant dance out onto the stage, each declaiming some lines from his particular role in history, and carrying a mirror or some shiny object which will reflect the members of the audience to themselves. At this effrontery only Mrs. Manresa retains her poise: she seizes the opportunity to lean forward and powder her nose. This is only natural, since she has no other identity besides that reflected in the mirror of the present moment. The rest feel they have, however, and resent the necessity of facing their time-bound selves. Some of them are only restrained from leaving by a "megaphontic, anonymous, loudspeaking" voice from the bushes.

The voice sums up both the satirical and constructive visions of Miss La Trobe, demanding first that the audience cast away illusions, and concluding with the bitter exhortation, *"Look at ourselves, ladies and gentlemen! Then at the wall; and ask how's this wall . . . civilization, to be built by* (here the mirrors flicked and flashed) *orts, scraps and fragments like ourselves?"* (P. 219.)

Then the voice turns to another theme—our greatness, reflected, for example, in *"the resolute refusal of some pimpled dirty little scrub in sandals to sell his soul. There is such a thing—you can't deny it. What? You can't descry it? All you can see of yourself is scraps, orts and fragments? Well then listen to the gramophone affirming."* Here is what the gramophone affirms:

> Like quicksilver sliding, filings magnetized, the distracted united. The tune began; the first note meant a second; the second a third. Then down beneath a force was born in opposition; then another. On different levels they diverged. On different levels ourselves went forward; flower gathering some on the surface; others descending to wrestle with the meaning; but all comprehending; all enlisted. The whole population of the mind's immeasurable profundity came flocking; . . . from chaos and cacophony measure; but not the melody of surface sound alone controlled it; but also the warring battle-plumed warriors straining asunder: To part? No. Compelled from the ends of the horizon; recalled from the edge of appalling crevasses; they crashed; solved; united. . . .
>
> Was that voice ourselves? Scraps, orts and fragments, are we, also, that? (Pp. 220-1.)

We all comprehend and enlist in the creation of a total harmony, the imaginative totality of our human life. This is the meaning of the music; and of Miss La Trobe's pageant; and of Mrs. Woolf's book. This theme is emphasized later on when the Rev. G. W. Streatfield prosily remarks that "To me at least it was indicated that we are members one of another. Each is part of the whole. . . . We act different parts; but are the same." (Pp. 223-6.) Or again, as the crowd leaves, amid idle chatter flash remarks luminous with the significance of all that has gone before. One of these is put in a question: "The looking-glasses now—did they mean the reflection is the dream; and the music . . . is the truth?" (P. 234.) The reflections in the glass are only our temporal identities; but the communion expressed in the music is our eternal identity.

After the crowd has gone we return to the macrocosmic pageant. But the characters in it are now enlarged: behind them is the meaning of the small pageant, and they are now acting in two plays. When Mrs. Manresa walks towards her car "like a goddess, buoyant, abundant, with flower-chained captives following in her wake," she is more than Mrs. Manresa—she is one whole aspect of our life. So are the others as they linger in the dusk.

Miss La Trobe, the artist, prepares to leave, now that the audience is gone and she need not face them. Looking back on her pageant she sees

that in the effort to communicate her vision lay glory; and that in her partial failure to do so lies the inevitable bondage of the artist to his own limitations, to his audience, and to his medium. Nevertheless, she cannot abandon the effort. As she leaves Pointz Hall another play begins to stir in her mind. " 'I should group them,' she murmured, 'here.' It would be midnight; there would be two figures, half-concealed by a rock. The curtain would rise. What would the first words be? The words escaped her." (P. 246.) Later, however, as she sits in a pub she again visualizes the scene: "There was the high ground at midnight; there the rock; and two scarcely perceptible figures. . . . She set down her glass. She heard the first words."

Now as Miss La Trobe sits in the pub, the actors in the macrocosmic drama at Pointz Hall sit quietly in the drawing-room, reading the paper and looking over the day's mail. For the reader, however, they are playing two dramas at once. Slowly the light fades, the sky becomes cold and severe. Bart rises and stalks silently from the room. Lucy closes her outline of history and tiptoes out. Now Giles and Isa are alone: they rise.

> Left alone for the first time that day they were silent. Alone, enmity was bared; also love. Before they slept, they must fight; after they had fought they would embrace. From that embrace another life might be born. But first they must fight, as the dog fox fights with the vixen, in the heart of darkness, in the fields of night.
>
> Isa let her sewing drop. The great hooded chairs had become enormous. And Giles too. And Isa too against the window. The window was all sky without colour. The house had lost its shelter. It was night before roads were made, or houses. It was the night that dwellers in caves had watched from some high place among rocks.
>
> Then the curtain rose. They spoke.

These are the concluding words of the book. They verify the vision of Miss La Trobe: for this is the scene which she visualizes in the pub; and the words she hears are the words which are about to be spoken as the curtain rises and the book ends. In this way the pageant which she staged earlier in the day, like this new pageant she is creating, is revealed as not merely a reconstruction of the past but as a prophetic insight into the essential reality of human life at all times and places.

This effect is reinforced at the end because the reader suddenly is related to the novel in the same way that Giles and Isa are related to Miss La Trobe's pageant. Throughout the book Giles and Isa have watched a pageant which they consider an interpretation of their life; suddenly, at the end, the reader sees that it *is* their life. Then he feels in full the impact of the novel as an interpretation of *his* life, because the novel as a whole is a pageant occurring literally *between the acts* of the drama which the reader himself plays before and after reading it. The effect of this device is to intensify and to expand the vision of the book. Its scope suddenly widens from the limits of the events in it to include the events of the

reader's own experience. When the curtain rises at the end, he closes the book and carries on the ensuing drama himself.

The vision of this book is clearly tragic. Shrouded in the sheltering and obscuring medium of time, Giles and Isa loom immense and representative, Man and Woman, gripped by the primeval necessities of love and hate and creation. From the complex interaction of these forces and others rises our eternal life; this is the deepest significance of Miss La Trobe's vision. The tragedy is that Giles and Isa, ourselves, do not retain their vision of this redeeming reality. They see in a glass darkly, a fact which leads Miss La Trobe to include comedy and tragedy in her pageant. But the comedy of our situation is so profound that it is almost indistinguishable from tragedy. Isa and Giles struggle and cleave together in "the heart of darkness, the fields of night." In the darkness their grandeur is titanic, but it is the grandeur of beings doomed to ceaseless struggle against the power on which they depend for existence.

There is no exultantly triumphant vision in *Between the Acts;* but it is a moot point whether a tragic vision of life can be called, as many have called this book, utterly negative. Although the luminous evasions of *To the Lighthouse* have been abandoned, the essential affirmation of the value of life remains, disenchanted but not destroyed.

Of the two solutions to our original problem it embodies the second—that is, the effort to find in one of the two worlds of mind and linear time an absolute. For *Between the Acts* means nothing less than this: if we would be saved, we must, through the exercise of our creative powers of mind and imagination, recreate time in our own image.

REVIEWS

MILTON AND HIS READERS[1]

A. S. P. WOODHOUSE

One of the minor paradoxes in the literary history of our time is that the neglect and depreciation of Milton by the poets, their camp-followers among the critics, and at last the general reader, has been accompanied by twenty-five years of extraordinarily vigorous Miltonic scholarship. Shakespeare apart, whose vogue never fails, only the Metaphysicals have received a like co-operative effort of understanding, and there the prosperous voyage has been made with the stream, instead of against it. Whatever the explanation, if we except such great and isolated names as Todd and Masson, the past quarter-century has done more for the exploration of Milton's writings and background than all the years in which his position as a classic was unassailed. A larger body of scholarship, supplying many new data and not a few discordant theories, awaits appraisal and synthesis.

This material, in so far as it bears on *Paradise Lost,* Mr. Rajan has mastered as no other English critic has done. The contrast between his first chapter, on Miltonic criticism, and a recent and culpably ill-informed volume on the same topic will not escape notice. To his command of what is called "the literature of the subject," Mr. Rajan has added a great deal of unobtrusive research, wisely concentrated not on sources but on analogues. Best of all, he brings to his task unusual critical alertness in reading the poem. Let one student of the text, long convinced of the centrality of parallelism in Milton's pattern, bear testimony to the exhaustiveness and sensitivity of Mr. Rajan's examination of this subject. As a piece of literary criticism, *Paradise Lost and the Seventeenth Century Reader* is fresh, incisive, and written with equal economy and charm. It is worthy of a place beside the late Charles Williams' introduction to Milton's *Poems* and the books on the epic by Mr. C. S. Lewis and Professor Douglas Bush.

These works might have been called "*Paradise Lost* and the Twentieth Century Reader"; nor is this reader long absent from Mr. Rajan's mind. Only, he insists that if we are to read *Paradise Lost* aright it must be in conformity to Milton's intention and, so far as possible, with the assumptions and expectations of the original audience. Thus historical method is to subserve understanding, and all Mr. Rajan's use of research, his predecessors' and his own, finds its direction in an effort to restore the assumptions and expectations of the seventeenth-century reader.

We think that the venture is justified by the results; but it raises some pretty fundamental questions in the theory of criticism, which Mr. Rajan avoids, and which there is no space to canvass here.[2] It also involves a

[1] *Paradise Lost and the Seventeenth Century Reader.* By B. RAJAN. London: Chatto and Windus [Toronto: Oxford]. 1947. Pp. 171. ($2.75)

[2] Cf. the reviewer's "The Approach to Milton" (*Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada,* Third Series, XXXVIII (1944), Section II, 201-13).

reduction of the assumptions and expectations, and (by consequence) of Milton's intention, to a sort of highest common factor among seventeenth-century readers. That a sense of this highest common factor was one of the governing conditions under which Milton wrote, is indubitable; that it was the only condition is far from indubitable. And to assume, even for purposes of argument, that it was, involves some drastic rejections.

Among these rejections are all the most characteristic findings of the *De Doctrina Christiana.* In Miltonic criticism today various schools confront one another. There are those who, like M. Saurat, have so acute a sense of Milton the rebel as to obscure the fact that he was a Christian poet, and there are those who, like Mr. Lewis, Professor Bush, and Professor Diekhoff, blandly ignore rebellion and heresy in favour of Milton's basic Christianity. Subsidiary is the problem of whether the doctrinal implications of *Paradise Lost* correspond to the pronouncements of the *De Doctrina.* Mr. Rajan decides that, though the correspondence is probably exact, it does not matter, since in the epic Milton is debarred from argumentation, wisely adheres to the language of scripture, and (partly from caution, if mainly from a principle of decorum) abstains from obtruding his "private philosophy" upon the seventeenth-century reader. Thus, for practical purposes, Mr. Rajan takes his stand with the second group of critics. Another and even more fundamental disagreement has occurred on the divisibility (save as a critical fiction) of "Milton, man and thinker," and "Milton the poet"; and Mr. Rajan's strong apprehension of Milton's "public character" as an epic poet leads him to make common cause with some very good critics, and some very bad ones, who insist on the division, and firmly to reject what has been called "the personal heresy" in criticism. So little light, indeed, does he expect even from Milton's literary experience that he scarcely refers to any of his other writings save the *De Doctrina,* which has to be introduced in order to be politely bowed off the scene. In both his decisions Mr. Rajan is on the winning, or rather on the temporarily ascendant, side; and he does his side good service by his knowledge and critical acumen, his cogency in argument, and the persuasiveness with which he writes. But there is no denying that his decisions entail his rejecting, as irrelevant to the study of *Paradise Lost,* a great many data patently relevant to an understanding of Milton.

Mr. Rajan makes the sacrifice cheerfully. For he has convinced himself that the background of *Paradise Lost* "is not a personal background"; that "an epic poem is too comprehensive and massive, too deeply concerned with its tradition and . . . its time, and with seeing all knowledge proportioned by its order, to be harassed, limited, or drawn aside by the private implications of its author's philosophy," and that it "cannot be defined genetically through its evolution in the mind of the poet" but only "through its effect on the mind of the audience for whom it was intended."

The first result of the sacrifice is certainly to render more manageable the still large body of data which Mr. Rajan retains; and most effective is

the use to which he puts it in the core of his book, the five sections of commentary on the poem. There he expounds the Miltonic pattern, with its assumption of a rational order, marked by degree or hierarchy, and issuing in a harmony of which the epic is itself a symbol, and with its subtle and constant employment of parallelism to reinforce the pattern and bring home to the reader the significance of its different levels—heaven, earth, the chaos, hell—and the relation of character and action thereto.

A more important result of Mr. Rajan's voluntary restriction is to put first things first. For *Paradise Lost* is a Christian poem, and this is its basic pattern. Only after these facts have been securely apprehended can one see in their proper focus Milton's deviations from orthodoxy and the features of the pattern which these deviations permit or entail, or read correctly the secondary meanings which the poem may have had for its author. This is praise which the critic would be perhaps unwilling to accept, since his claim is that these considerations are to be, not postponed, but abandoned: a fact which in no way lessens the value of his book as a corrective or its service to those who cannot take so extreme a view as his.

Among such the reviewer must be content to be reckoned. For he cannot forget the seriousness with which Milton held his beliefs, whether orthodox or heterodox, and the extreme improbability of his having regarded his deviations from orthodoxy as mere private opinions; nor the consistency of the poet's career, the way in which all his experience and all his effort led on to *Paradise Lost;* nor yet the elements in his thought and personality which could not fail to issue in a degree of resistance to the discipline which he valued and which the epic embodies—a resistance which the Satanic school perceives, and wrongly interprets; nor, finally, the egocentric character of Milton's imagination, which Coleridge long ago divined, and the resulting tendency to write himself, and his conflicts, and his resolutions of conflict, into his poems, so that it is not for the reader alone that they "allay the perturbations of the mind and set the affections in right tune."

These things, it is true, are secondary in their effect. For the informed reader they complicate, no doubt, but also enrich the study of the poem. They do not disturb its main outlines and must not be allowed to distract attention from them. But effects are not negligible because they are secondary. Such effects are precisely those that lie beyond the necessities of the subject-matter and form, and beyond the assumptions and expectations of the common reader, and hence they may specially require the critic's response and exposition. For so sensitive a critic Mr. Rajan is unexpectedly willing to ignore them.

It would also appear that he is willing to ignore secondary effects which are much more purely literary in their interest. Of the reader's expectations in regard to the classical epic form, and the poet's brilliant success in meeting them, he has given no systematic account; but he has said enough in his admirable chapter on Milton's style to suggest that here too secondary

effects are to be ignored in favour of primary. Perhaps the most obvious example of such effects would be found in a category with which Mr. Rajan has not chosen to deal, that of characterization. Here the epic form sets severe limits, reinforced by the remoteness from common experience of the action and persons which *Paradise Lost* celebrates. We have no right to expect a high degree of humanization and individuation; but in Satan and his fellows, in Eve, and in Adam in his relations with Eve, we get, as so often with Milton, more than we expect.

That Mr. Rajan is well aware of this fact, no one need doubt. There is perhaps as much of strategy as of conviction in his insistence on the limits which he has set for himself—and for Milton. To anticipate secondary effects as if they were primary is to see a poem out of focus and to court disappointment; and the tendency to do precisely this has been one of the principal causes of the reaction against Milton. So Mr. Rajan seeks to guard against this error by commending to the twentieth-century reader the point of view, not of this school of criticism or of that, but of the seventeenth-century reader. Critical postulates are justified chiefly by what the critic is able to do with them. With his, Mr. Rajan has been able to make a notable contribution to our understanding of *Paradise Lost* and, indirectly, to administer a check to those who are more prone to attack than to understand.

It seems a good deal less certain today than it did to another Cambridge critic in the thirties, that "Milton's dislodgement, after his two centuries of predominance," has been "effected with remarkably little fuss."

AFRIKANDER NATIONALISM* — A. BRADY

Among the movements of nationalism within the British Commonwealth that of the Afrikander people is of singular interest. Here is a national group derived mainly from Dutch, French, and German stock, shaped by three centuries of struggle for survival in Africa, and divided at times by profound issues of politics. For Africa and the British Commonwealth the aims and conduct of this small community have a major significance, and for the political scientist they constitute rich case material in the study of nationality.

Michael Roberts and A. E. G. Trollip in *The South African Opposition, 1939-1945,* throw some interesting light upon the subject. They do not examine nationalism in its many cultural aspects, a subject which in South Africa demands study. They deal merely with the political opposition to the government throughout the period of war and illustrate how Dr. Malan, the present Prime Minister of the Union, built up his party in those critical

**The South African Opposition, 1939-1945: An Essay in Contemporary History.* By MICHAEL ROBERTS and A. E. G. TROLLIP. London, Cape Town, New York, Toronto: Longmans, Green. 1947. Pp. x, 240. ($4.50)

years as the chief vehicle of Afrikander protest against the policies of General Smuts. The book is heavily factual, replete with quotations in Afrikaans, but it provides the reliable information from which some generalizations may be drawn concerning Afrikander nationalism and the tortuous politics of the time.

There are four different kinds of Afrikander nationalist. There is the distinguished school of General Smuts who carries on the political traditions which he with General Botha helped to create in the years prior to the First World War. To Smuts, the Afrikander should feel pride in his tradition and his culture, but he should not shrink from merging with the English South Africans to create a united people, for the two European groups are thrown together in a common destiny. Characteristic is the remark of Smuts: "Just as the English and Scots came together, so shall we." The necessities of modern civilization and the special role of the European race in Africa demand the closest co-operation. In this matter the sentiments of the past should not be allowed to dominate the action of the future.

Close to the ideal of Smuts but in subtle respects distinct from it is that of the late General Hertzog, which has its living exponents in the Afrikander party. For some thirty-six years Hertzog advocated a "two streams" policy that would leave each people separate from the other while still generously collaborating with the other within the one state. He believed that Smuts was too hasty in seeking a fusion for which the Afrikander people were not actually ready. In time coalescence might be desirable, but the time was not yet. In opposition to Smuts and Hertzog, Dr. Malan presented the ardent and uncompromising national creed that is sometimes known as Krugerism. Here the ultimate goal was the Afrikander republic of Paul Kruger, free from the Empire, devoted to the life and culture of the Afrikanders, and unmodified by efforts to achieve compromises with the British. This isolationist faith, fed by tradition, was intensified by the outbreak of war in 1939 and by the drawing of South Africa into what was regarded by Nationalists as merely another of Britain's imperialist struggles. For an interval after his break with Smuts in 1939 Hertzog was persuaded to align himself with the Krugerism of Malan, but the interval was short for he could not forsake the faith which had inspired his long political career. He could not lend himself to the project of a state wherein the English would be treated as inferior and wherein his "two streams" policy, implying equality of status between the two peoples, would be sacrificed. In his last years (he died in 1942) his ideas were in eclipse, but it was inevitable that their appeal would be renewed when the passions of the war era subsided.

The fourth group and the most extreme nationalists are those who discard the liberal democratic tradition and seek a régime somewhat like that of the National Socialists in Germany. But this group, as the authors of *The South African Opposition* show, is without cohesion. In 1941, when the prestige of German arms was high, the Ossewabrandwag, the most

formidable organization of these nationalists, was flushed with enthusiasm and confident that it might soon be able to create an authoritarian state. Its ideas were those of National Socialism mixed strangely with Calvinism (the Calvinist tradition is strong amongst all Afrikanders). "The Ossewabrandwag idea," wrote the chairman of its supreme council, "being the organic, the family and the national idea, originates in creation, in birth and therefore in God, and we have every right to describe it as the divine idea, whereas in contrast with the divine, the other may be called the human. The other idea, the imperialistic, and also the mechanical or liberalistic, originates in the depraved nature of man who is under the influence of the Evil One and is doomed to ultimate downfall."

Since the conclusion of the war the Ossewabrandwag has waned in influence and membership, whereas liberal nationalism has grown in strength and in the past year brought Dr. Malan into office with the first exclusively Afrikander cabinet since the Union was established. For the present Dr. Malan has shelved his republicanism, moved closer in practice at least to the concepts of Hertzog, concentrated on the native issue, and, in face of the present configuration of world politics, modified his former isolationism. The Nationalists are implacably hostile to Communism, and now regard collaboration with the British Commonwealth as an aid in stemming the spread of Communism and in obtaining security for South Africa. In all this, there is an interesting interaction of ideas with the hard facts of the contemporary world.

THE YOUNG HENRY ADAMS*

KENNETH MACLEAN

One of Gibbon's good rules for reading was: recall all you know of the subject of the book about to be read. This rule will likely be observed in taking up a new biography of one who has told so wonderfully his own story. The reader comes to Mr. Samuels' book with great curiosity to see what light it will throw on the manner and themes of *The Education of Henry Adams*. One statement I should like to be able to challenge in Mr. Samuels' excellent biography is his observation that Adams' taste in literature was solidly conservative. In style, *The Education* is like nothing so much as modern poetry. Here Adams has set forth the imagery experience has left behind, with that impressionistic heightening which time and memory create in the imagination. He remembered, and we remember, those white kid gloves which worried Lincoln at the Inaugural Ball. Much of the imagery of *The Education* seems modern because of its terror. The origins of Adams' advanced literary manner will still remain a mystery, I think, after one has been through Mr. Samuels' very careful study, which at the same time will show, to the surprise of some of us, the rather poor

**The Young Henry Adams.* By ERNEST SAMUELS. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press [Toronto: Saunders]. 1948. Pp. xvi, 378. ($6.25)

place poetry and literature had even in Cambridge and Boston in the middle years of nineteenth-century America. Adams insisted on literature in spite of his age. His Horace went to the soldier in camp. Literary critics were themselves sometimes an obstacle. Samuels suggests that Lowell's disparaging criticism delayed for many years Adams' proper reading of Wordsworth, whose *Prelude* we may suppose suggested to him the aesthetic and philosophical value of those "spots of time" in his own life.

Adams says in *The Education* that no man ever gave him the right steer, no woman the wrong. While there is no mention in *The Education* of his wife and her tragic suicide, this writing is at once an elegy to her and to that erotic energy, symbolized by Venus and the Virgin, which disappeared as a force in modern times with the exploitation of the new energies of science. The reader of Mr. Samuels' biography will indulge a legitimate interest in the personal life and psychology of one who has told of the spiritual severance of modern man from woman. Adams himself has probably prepared us too well to see him moving insensitively through his world of men and dynamos, speaking of women as "a damn humbug." Too easily perhaps we see as insensitivity the fact that he did a noble review of Howell's high-minded bridal volume at the moment of his own marriage; that he permitted his marriage journey in Europe to be made the occasion for dining with numberless German professors and, even worse, reading their books; that he chose in his Lowell Lecture to expound with Germanic thoroughness the subject of the primitive rights of women.

This troubling theme finds little place in Mr. Samuels' biography, which has a story to tell of young and brilliant achievement. There can be no doubt that Henry Adams attained at a very early age that position of importance and leadership that might be expected of a son of a family of great distinction and great wealth. His brilliant undergraduate career at Harvard reached its climax in the privilege of appearing as class orator in the heat of a June commencement. With distinguished friends he moved after Harvard to the schools of Germany, and now began his career as spokesman and correspondent to the American public, a career shortly to be pursued in Washington where at the beginning of Lincoln's administration he was doing important journalism though barely twenty years old. In the chapter "Washington Correspondent" Mr. Samuels has written a fascinating account of the direction of Republican politics in 1860, with Sumner leading the radical side, and Seward the moderate cause which the Adams family would follow to their peril. When Henry's father was sent to London as Lincoln's ambassador, Henry went along as secretary, and here with the same precocity he continued his political journalism, at the same time enlarging his literary range in the midst of a brilliant society. Few young American careers could match this one, year for year. Back again in Washington in the post-war years Henry began to rake mud in a way that made him unattractive to the Grant administration. He did not hasten to call at the executive mansion, preferring, as he said, to remem-

ber the White House as it was when Lincoln was in it. In 1870 he went to England "for a moral bath," and shortly thereafter settled, not too willingly, in a Harvard chair. Mr. Samuels has written with great charm of Henry the professor, who answered his mail as he sat in faculty meetings and who made himself comfortable in his seminars with the sherry and cigars which were not allowed to his students. But no professor was ever more sensitive to the spiritual needs of the student. There is a truly exciting story told here of Adams' work in the development of medieval and American studies at Harvard. It was he who baked Harvard's first batch of Ph.D.'s. In these academic years he was editing the distinguished *North American Review,* and the journalist fortunately had not been lost in the editor whose advice to one contributor was: "Stand on your head and spit at someone."

This biography shows us an Adams who was going great guns. Successful himself, he was moving ahead with the spirit of the times, subscribing to progressive but not radical positions; in other words, he was a typical Adams. His evolutionary views were characteristic. Again one must pay tribute to Mr. Samuels' excellent assistance in helping us understand Adams' points of view. In the evolutionary debate Adams followed the line of Agassiz who postulated a catastrophic history, more in harmony with biblical teaching than the gradual evolutionary theory of Darwin.

After a scant decade at Harvard, Adams moved to Washington, the city of his heart, where with the aid of several research assistants he wrote his monumental *History of the United States during the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison,* which describes that era when the new and creative American character was formed. Though this was optimistic history, his model was Gibbon's *Decline and Fall.* After its completion, we are told, Adams was prompted to "do Gibbon" in the garden, to imitate the evening walk the great historian had taken on the day his long work was finished. Gibbon's superb *Autobiography* Adams was to imitate and even surpass, but the *History* was not a *Decline and Fall.* The public did not "do Gibbon" on its appearance. Praise, as Samuels nicely says, refused to blow a gale. This disappointment coincided closely in time with the great personal sorrow of his life. The Adams who recovered from these things is the Adams of *The Education* who is motoring around with John LaFarge (mentioned only once in this biography) to see the cathedrals of northern France, using modern energy to behold an ancient energy. This later Adams is clearly a lighter spirit. Things German are being replaced by things French. Bulky history and bulky historical scholarship are put aside in favour of the simple personal imagination. The restlessness may be gone and that accentuated disposition to fight, but still the older Adams who had discovered poetry and all that lives may be essentially a younger spirit than the youth who was bald and grey at twenty-seven. We should hope that Mr. Samuels will write the later story.

This is an excellent biography on a subject of first importance. Mr.

Samuels has centred his attention on Adams' abundant writings as student, professor, and journalist; and these literary works he has set with all the care of excellent scholarship in the background of the life and thought of Cambridge, Boston, London, and Washington in Henry Adams' time. Nor is the remoter background wanting. Most noticeably Mr. Samuels has written with admirable understanding of England's great eighteenth-century tradition of political writing which the young Adams clearly wished to follow, the tradition of Swift, Walpole, Burke, and Gibbon. Finally, Mr. Samuels has written with a nice realization that he was dealing with irony.

HANDEL AND DELIUS* — SIR ERNEST MACMILLAN

Like many great men, George Frederic Handel, composer, impresario, man of the world, eclectic, plagiarist, and, for two hundred years, musical idol of the British people, has suffered at the hands of his admirers perhaps more severely than at those of his detractors. Fortunately his most popular work is also his greatest masterpiece and stands in no danger of being forgotten, but it is regrettable that so much almost equally fine music should be left to gather dust on our library shelves. "The Messiah" can always be counted upon as "safe box-office"; performances of other Handelian works, on this continent at least, are at the best highly speculative.

Still more regrettable is it that "Messiah" (the title by the way was almost always used without the article in Handel's day) should have become barnacled with so many "traditions"—many of them alien to the composer's style. While the sketchy character of the original score necessitates some additions, a long succession of "additional accompaniments" has come wellnigh to obliterating the simple outlines of Handel's string writing. Instrumental interludes and ritornels are mercilessly excised to shorten the work and even the order of movements has been changed by conductors who cannot have read the text intelligently, so that some performances distort the oratorio to a degree that one might almost call travesty.

In his excellent biography of Handel, written in 1909, R. A. Streatfeild remarks: "The stupendous masterpiece, in which Handel released Christianity from the bondage of fact and wrote the romance of human redemption in characters of immortal fire, is now degraded to the level of a mild digestive which helps the struggling Nonconformist conscience to tide over the festivities of Christmas. The ceremony of attending a performance of 'The Messiah' is to the average Englishman as immutable a Christmas institution as going to church or eating a slice of turkey."

**Handel's Messiah: A Touchstone of Taste.* By ROBERT MANSON MYERS. New York: Macmillan Co. [Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada]. 1948. Pp. xxii, 338. ($5.00)

Delius: A Critical Biography. By ARTHUR HUTCHINGS. London: Macmillan & Co. [Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada]. 1948. Pp. x, 193. ($3.25)

There is sufficient truth in this reproach to explain if not entirely to justify the jibes often levelled at Handelian oratorio by the musical epicure: it does not, however, represent the whole truth even of 1909—still less that of 1949. Certainly we at the present time are in a position to study "The Messiah" as Handel wrote it and to appraise it calmly as a work of art. Mr. Myers' illuminating picture of eighteenth-century England is one of the most valuable of existing contributions to our understanding of its background. Though still in his twenties, Robert Manson Myers is already becoming recognized as one of the chief living authorities on Handel. He is nothing if not thorough: his "select" bibliography, running to some sixteen pages, includes "only titles of peculiar interest to students of Handel's 'Messiah,' " and does not include references to such notable literary lights as Pope, Addison, Swift, Dr. Johnson and others who, nevertheless, figure more or less prominently in the text.

It is to Mr. Myers' credit that, full of youthful enthusiasm for his subject though he is, he maintains a balance of judgment and exercises a care in the selection of his material that win the reader's admiration. The book, in short, fulfils admirably its purpose of picturing the England of Handel's day, of describing the original impact of his greatest work on his contemporaries and tracing its subsequent developments in Great Britain, Europe, and America, and of examining with critical care its nature and make-up. The musician might wish that greater stress had been laid on the purely musical aspects, but perhaps the general reader will find the book all the more readable for subordinating these. At all events the subject is dealt with interestingly and comprehensively. There are occasional lapses of style: one regrets such phrases as "thousands of musicians unite . . . to perform Handel's rendition of the great Christmas narrative" and, "Under such favourable circumstances 'Rinaldo' caught in a night"—but these are very rare. While agreeing with Mr. Myers' strictures (p. 75) on Handel's frequently false accentuation (a reminder that he was after all a foreigner) one might point out that, with far less excuse, many English-speaking composers have similarly mutilated their own language and that even so great a song-writer as Brahms is at times scarcely kinder to his mother tongue.

The book as a whole can be heartily recommended not only to everyone interested in Handel, but to the student of eighteenth-century England: it will certainly help to round out his knowledge. Thirteen well-selected illustrative plates add to its value.

Previous biographies of Delius have perhaps given us a too personalized view of the composer. Eric Fenby, to whom in his late years he owed so much, and Philip Heseltine, who owed so much to him, have both given us valuable studies of his complex and fascinating personality nor have they failed to contribute their due share of penetrating musical criticism. It has however remained for Arthur Hutchings (appointed a year ago to the chair of Music in the University of Durham) to write a biography which, though short, includes practically all essential material and which, though

highly appreciative, is not blind to the weaknesses of either Delius the man or Delius the musician. One might take issue with Professor Hutchings over his estimate of this or that particular work, but his judgments are well balanced and there can be no question of his thorough knowledge of his subject.

When one listens to the best of Delius' music one is inclined to share Professor Hutchings' view that, for all his obsession with Nietzschean philosophy, the composer was essentially religious and, in a sense, a mystic. For that matter it would seem to have been mystical elements in Nietzsche himself that chiefly attracted him, though he cultivated at times a somewhat hard, domineering manner, a contempt for weakness, and an egocentricity that conform to the familiar Nietzschean pattern. In his final conclusion our author classes Delius as one of those "Nature Mystics" of which England has produced some of the most notable. He makes an illuminating comparison with Wordsworth: "Delius, like Wordsworth, had an arrogant, aristocratic nature. . . ." But he differed from Wordsworth "by having the temperament only, not consciously following the mystical way." Space forbids further quotation and the reader can only be referred to the book itself. This biography is worthy of its subject and is not likely to be easily superseded.

SHORTER NOTICES

The Making of an Insurgent: An Autobiography: 1882-1919. By FIORELLO H. LAGUARDIA. Introduction by M. R. WERNER. Philadelphia and New York: Lippincott [Toronto: Longmans, Green]. 1948. Pp. 222. ($3.50)

Fiorello LaGuardia was one of the half-dozen outstanding Americans of his generation. No one who knew him will ever forget the incessant activity, the driving energy, the impulsive decision, the reckless honesty, the admitted prejudice, the boisterous humour, the rage for justice, or the depth and breadth of his human sympathies.

He was a man of fine intelligence and of great political sagacity. But he was also impatient and stubborn. As a result he made mistakes and sometimes the mistake, as he himself said, was "a beaut." This frankness in admitting his errors was one of his distinctive characteristics and was responsible in some measure for the affection with which he was regarded by the people of the city he loved and which he served with such zeal, enthusiasm, and success.

This book does less than justice to either the head or the heart of its author. Dictated hastily (in an attempt to fulfil a long-standing promise to a publisher) during the last few months of his obviously fatal illness, it provides a plain record of the external facts of his personal and public life down to the end of the First World War. It tells concisely of his birth in

New York City and his early years with his band-master father in western army posts, his brief career in the U.S. consular service, his work as an immigration officer while studying law in New York, his first and second elections to Congress, his experiences as a Congressman and a combat flyer (for he worked in both capacities) in the Air Force, and his return to politics in Washington and New York.

As the most significant events in LaGuardia's varied and vigorous career came in later years, the larger and more valuable part of the story is still to be told. Fortunately M. R. Werner, the well-known American historian and biographer, was selected before LaGuardia's death to provide the full report of this dramatic life.

The Making of an Insurgent has no pretensions to literary style and it reveals only a part of the complexity and charm of the man it describes. The "Little Flower" knew all the tricks of the platform and was even better in direct human relationships; but the pen was not his tool. LaGuardia's humour, his knowledge, his ability as an actor, his obvious, transparent, and passionate sincerity, even his irascibility, made him an exciting and persuasive figure on the hustings. He was more effective still in personal contacts. For example, in the work of the Canada—United States Permanent Joint Board on Defence, of which he was the American Chairman, he did a job of first importance with exceptional adroitness and success. The way in which he and the Canadian Chairman, the late O. M. Biggar, worked together was as delightful as it was productive. Colonel Biggar was fully equal to the Mayor in ability and devotion to the cause they both served. In contrast to the ebullient LaGuardia, he was reserved, precise, and meticulous in word and gesture. Yet the two men, working together for five years on problems of vital importance and in complete harmony, drove their combined team rapidly and with no waste effort down the sometimes rather difficult highway of international co-operation.

The Making of an Insurgent provides an introduction to a fascinating story. Despite its shortcomings it is well worth reading. But for the full flavour of the politically and socially important story of LaGuardia's life (and his impact on the life of his generation on this continent) it will be necessary to wait for Werner's biography. Few writers can have had a more stimulating subject.

H. L. KEENLEYSIDE

Nietzsche: The Story of a Human Philosopher. By H. A. REYBURN in collaboration with H. E. HINDERKS and J. G. TAYLOR. London: Macmillan & Co. [Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada]. 1948. Pp. viii, 500. ($5.25)

Of a number of recent books on Nietzsche this one seems the best qualified to initiate a new and very fruitful approach to a philosopher who has suffered more than any other modern thinker from the distorted

accounts of friends and foes alike. The author's aim is modestly set forth as being an attempt to analyse dispassionately and objectively Nietzsche's life and work in their mutual dependence. If no bold claim of originality is advanced, the result is nevertheless, for all but those who have lost the taste for discerning objectivity, deeply gratifying. It bears out the author's hope that in understanding Nietzsche aright "we may also come to understand some of the tragedy of Europe to-day." Needless to say, not all the data of Nietzsche's life or work stand in direct relation to this tragedy of Europe. Much of what the author tells us about Nietzsche's dangerously imprudent mode of living belongs to a pattern of decadence that any healthy civilization would be able to control or to contain. We move much closer to the European danger zone when we realize, through Reyburn's detailed presentation, how poorly trained Nietzsche was for his self-appointed mission as a revaluator of all values. That, even as a classical scholar, Nietzsche's penetration of his subject leaves much to be desired we may not consider of great importance, though it should caution us against an uncritical acceptance of *The Birth of Tragedy* and of his denunciation of Socrates. It is when he comes to Nietzsche's philosophy proper that Reyburn excels in showing it to be lacking in most of the prerequisites of European philosophy, notably in that of clear thinking. Set against the background of Kant and Hegel, with both of whom Reyburn displays a very intimate acquaintance, Nietzsche becomes a mere propagator of contentions that emanate from the tortured mind of an ill-adjusted personality. Tragedy for Nietzsche became complete when his decadence led him, through the despair of nihilism, to extol an unmitigated will-to-power gospel. All that was now needed to complete the tragedy for Germany as well was a few hundred thousand willing ears to believe his message—a condition that was easily fulfilled in view of the general gullibility of men and of their particular susceptibility to Nietzsche's stylistic enchantment.

To leave no stone of objectivity unturned, Reyburn even goes to the trouble of subjecting *Thus spake Zarathustra* to a serious analysis in the light of religious thought—which is to carry fair-mindedness to extremes.

The author on the title-page acknowledges his indebtedness to two collaborators, one a lecturer in German, the other a lecturer in psychology. If the former deserves credit for a most accurate translation of Nietzsche quotations, the latter is most likely responsible for an estimate of Nietzsche's psychology which should dispel the excessive esteem in which Nietzsche is held even by those who look askance at his philosophy.

Beginners will find no better book than this if they wish to enter the sphere of Nietzschean problems, and the more seasoned student, especially if he should find himself lost in the fog of German interpretations of Nietzsche, will be equally glad for this guide to bring him back to earth.

H. BOESCHENSTEIN

Civilization on Trial. By ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE. New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press. 1948. Pp. viii, 263. ($3.50)

It is a compliment to the clarity and persuasiveness of Toynbee's *A Study of History* to say that, in theory, a sympathetic and intelligent reader of that work could have produced a group of essays substantially the same as those here presented. It is no less a compliment to suggest that, in fact, few would have had the hardihood to vie with Toynbee on ground where he has displayed such skill and grace. Although the ideas put forward in these essays may be found, expressed or implied, in the larger *Study,* the value of this volume lies in the fact that the wisdom and insight gained by the author through his vast historical experience are being employed to illuminate the dangers and opportunities which face the world today. Toynbee believes that his knowledge of the whole sweep of human history has brought him major advantages in the understanding of current historical movements, and he emphasizes his belief by frequent exhortations to students of history to look beyond the hedges and fences of their own carefully cultivated special fields and obtain "mental perspective." The present book itself exhibits some of the benefits of "mental perspective," and as the product of a mind with some claim to wisdom should attract the attention of all who are concerned with current and future events.

The subject-matter of the essays ranges from the Graeco-Roman civilization to the international outlook of today, from an autobiographical account of the process whereby Toynbee's theory of history took form in his mind to a discussion of the nature and destiny of man; but the stress is always on the present. It may be unfair and misleading to boil down a varied and lively mixture to a dull residue. Nevertheless Toynbee's major thesis appears to be that Western society, if it is to be saved, must accomplish three great tasks. First, it must find a mean between the extremes of rigid socialism and unrestricted private enterprise; second, it must erect a political framework within which its national states shall be members of a whole; third, and most important, it must transfer itself from its present materialistic foundations to a spiritual basis. The first two of these specifics are likely to win a large measure of agreement; the third will, no doubt, be repugnant to all who are tinctured by the prevalent materialism and who may be bemused by our recent amazing technological advances. Toynbee attempts to meet the critics in the two final essays of the book which deal with the concept of progress. His knowledge of history leads him to believe that progress is comprehensible only in spiritual terms, that true advance, in human history, is to be seen only in the development of "higher" religions. The difficulty here is, of course, to find a reliable criterion. Western man with his scientific propensity for measurement and statistics is at a loss to apply his methods to development of this type and is in danger of denying the reality of such progress because he cannot measure it. Yet it is at least possible that Toynbee is right and that the method of science is not universally applicable.

Since the essays are largely based on lectures, they are somewhat exoteric in character. However the absence of foot-notes and the ease of the exposition must not deceive the reader into assuming that the work is quick or superficial. If documentation is sought, it may be found in the increasing series of the annual *Survey of International Affairs* and in the six volumes of *A Study of History*.

M. St. A. Woodside

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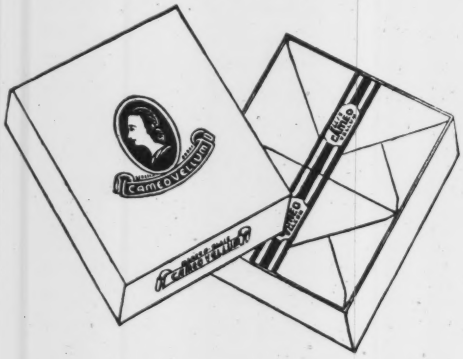

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